



Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS

WEDNESDAY — 23 MAR 2022



	International	National	Regional and Local
Events, Opportunities Go to articles	03/23 Day 28 of the Russia invasion 03/23 Putin, China backing, to attend G20 03/23 Ukraine fights into 2nd month of war 03/23 Russia FM issues warning to NATO 03/23 Putin adviser quits over Ukraine; flees 03/23 Zelenskyy: 100,000 trapped in Mariupol 03/23 UN chief: time Russia to end 'absurd' war 03/23 Long queues for Russians as sanctions bite 03/23 WHO: Covid cases rise for 2nd straight week 03/23 Hong Kong world highest Covid death rate 03/23 China official: 1 of 2 'black box' found 03/22 Russia G20 membership under fire 03/22 Why Mariupol important to Russia? 03/22 What are chances of a Kremlin coup? 03/22 Dissent brews over Putin's leadership 03/22 Russia be held accountable war crimes? 03/22 Ukraine fights war of ambush, skirmish 03/22 US: Russia loses 10% of combat forces 03/22 Russians destroy Chernobyl laboratory 03/22 US, Ukraine eye Putin propaganda bubble 03/22 Ukraine: Russia forces 3 days supplies left 03/22 Ukraine push back; Russia pummels cities 03/22 Ukraine air force outgunned but fights back 03/22 Russia pulls aircraft out from south Ukraine 03/22 How many Russia soldiers died in Ukraine? 03/22 Chernobyl wildfires fear: radioactive smoke 03/22 Nations retreat from globalization 03/22 Gas prices: Europe gig workers strike 03/22 TotalEnergies will stop buying Russia oil 03/22 China in back seat international diplomacy 03/22 Crash of China Eastern Airlines Flight 5735 03/22 Covid cases rising in Europe 03/22 South Africa lifts restrictions, keeps masks	03/23 Test scores rise: return to in-person classes 03/22 L.A. first in US: average gas price \$6 03/22 What's the deal with masks on planes? 03/22 TSA orders new 3-D baggage scanners 03/22 Omicron subvariant 70% of new infections 03/22 Uninsured: bills for Covid treatments, tests 03/22 Travel ban China officials for 'repression' 03/22 Court blocks ICE 'priority' system arrests 03/22 Multiple groups of 100+ migrants at border 03/22 Gas prices rise fastest rate on record 03/22 Florida Disney workers walk out in furor 03/22 Activists: Russia oil imports flow into US 03/22 Storm, tornado tears through New Orleans	03/22 UW: omicron subvariant 25% cases tested 03/22 Seattle Starbucks votes to unionize 03/22 Seattle PD policing, public safety plan 03/22 Seattle PD envisions new work changes 03/22 Seattle PD still struggling recruit officers 03/22 Seattle Pride cuts Amazon as a sponsor 03/22 Seattle clears trash off Ballard sidewalks 03/22 King Co. program for homeless cars, RVs 03/22 Seattle homelessness a housing problem? 03/22 WEA: teacher shortage to get worse 03/22 Concrete strike impacts unfinished roads 03/22 Ukrainian refugees prefer resettling in WA 03/22 Spokane public schools: police 'last resort' 03/22 Drought remains across Inland Northwest
Cyber Awareness Go to articles	03/22 Russia largest tech firm too big to fail? 03/22 Top Russia meat producer suffers attack 03/22 Ransom attack Greece postal service 03/22 'Secrets sprawl' software supply chain 03/22 New wave DeadBolt ransomware attacks 03/22 Crypto implicated in child porn, terrorism 03/22 Chinese hackers custom malware exposed	03/23 Okta: Lapsus\$ accessed customers' data 03/22 Microsoft confirms Lapsus\$ hack 03/22 Someone hacked the Spelling Bee 03/22 Kentucky hospital details cyberattack 03/22 Hackers steal \$1.7M NFTs from crypto VC 03/22 US checklist to counter Russia cyberattacks 03/22 FBI warns energy sector on Russia activity 03/22 Social engineering attacks to rule in Web3	
Terror Conditions Go to articles	03/23 Taliban block education for girls 03/23 Al-Shabab attacks Somalia capital airport 03/22 India: drop in terror incidents J-K region 03/22 Terrorist 'acted in line with ISIS manuals' 03/22 Israel: 4 killed; knife, car-ramming attack 03/22 Social media fuels fundraising ISIS camps		
Suspicious, Unusual Go to articles	03/22 Antarctica heat wave broke records 03/22 Study: wildfires pose socioeconomic risk	03/23 Permanent DST bad for health? 03/22 Inflation changing tipping habits?	03/22 Parents billed for caring of own children
Crime, Criminals Go to articles		03/23 Belarus: Jan 6 rioter granted asylum 03/23 Surge in shootings show no sign of easing 03/22 Freedom after 25yrs wrongful conviction 03/22 Elected official guilty Jan 6 Capitol entry 03/22 Lawsuit: NYPD illegally obtains, stores DNA 03/22 Pet experts warn: increase in canine thefts 03/22 DOJ inadvertently lists NY 'sex cult' clients	03/22 Funding for sexual assault kits storage 03/22 Fired employee opens fire on boss's home 03/22 Lacey high school evacuated: bomb threat 03/22 WSP: 'dangerous trend' drive-by shootings 03/22 Escape: teens house arrest cut off monitors 03/22 Franklin County jail: second death in month

Events, Opportunities

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	03/23 Putin, China backing, to attend G20
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russias-ambassador-indonesia-says-putin-plans-attend-g20-summit-2022-03-23/
GIST	<p>JAKARTA, March 23 (Reuters) - Russian President Vladimir Putin plans to attend the next G20 summit in Indonesia later this year and received valuable backing from Beijing on Wednesday in a pushback to suggestions by some members that Russia could be barred from the group.</p> <p>The United States and its Western allies are assessing whether Russia should remain within the Group of Twenty major economies following its invasion of Ukraine, sources involved in the discussions told Reuters.</p> <p>But any move to exclude Russia would probably be vetoed by others in the group, raising the prospect of some countries instead skipping G20 meetings, the sources said.</p> <p>Russia's ambassador to Indonesia, which currently holds the rotating G20 chair, said Putin intended to travel to the Indonesian resort island of Bali for the G20 summit in November.</p> <p>"It will depend on many, many things, including the COVID situation, which is getting better. So far, his intention is... he wants to," Ambassador Lyudmila Vorobieva told a news conference.</p> <p>Asked about suggestions Russia could be kicked out of the G20, she said it was a forum to discuss economic issues and not a crisis like Ukraine.</p> <p>"Of course expulsion of Russia from this kind of forum will not help these economic problems to be resolved. On the contrary, without Russia it would be difficult to do so."</p> <p>China, which has not condemned Russia's invasion and criticised Western sanctions, defended Moscow on Wednesday, calling Russia an "important member" of the G20.</p> <p>The G20 is a group that needs to find answers to critical issues, such as economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said.</p> <p>"No member has the right to remove another country as a member. The G20 should implement real multilateralism, strengthen unity and cooperation," he told a news briefing.</p> <p>Indonesia's foreign ministry declined to comment on calls for Russia to be excluded from the G20.</p> <p>Russian President Vladimir Putin sent his troops into Ukraine on Feb. 24 on what he calls a "special military operation" to demilitarise and "denazify" the country. Ukraine and the West say Putin launched an unprovoked war of aggression.</p> <p>'BUSY WITH SOMETHING ELSE'</p> <p>Russia is facing an onslaught of international sanctions led by Western countries aiming at isolating it from the global economy, including shutting it out of the SWIFT global bank messaging system and restricting dealings by its central bank.</p> <p>On Tuesday, Poland said it had suggested to U.S. commerce officials that it replace Russia within the G20 group and that the suggestion had received a "positive response".</p> <p>German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said G20 members would have to decide but the issue was not a priority now.</p>

	<p>"When it comes to the question of how to proceed with the WTO (World Trade Organization) and the G20, it is imperative to discuss this question with the countries that are involved and not to decide individually," Scholz said.</p> <p>"It is quite clear that we are busy with something else than coming together in such meetings. We urgently need a ceasefire."</p> <p>Russia's participation in the G20 is almost certain to be discussed on Thursday, when U.S. President Joe Biden meets allies in Brussels.</p> <p>"We believe that it cannot be business as usual for Russia in international institutions and in the international community," U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan told reporters.</p> <p>A European Union source separately confirmed the discussions about Russia's status at G20 meetings.</p> <p>"It has been made very clear to Indonesia that Russia's presence at forthcoming ministerial meetings would be highly problematic for European countries," said the source, adding there was, however, no clear process for excluding a country.</p> <p>Indonesia's deputy central bank governor, Dody Budi Waluyo, said on Monday Jakarta's position was one of neutrality and it would use its G20 leadership to try to resolve problems, but Russia had a "strong commitment" to attend and other members could not forbid it from doing so.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/23 Ukraine fights into 2nd month of war
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-zelenskyy-kyiv-europe-nato-e35e54b40359e52f3ffd4911577b669a
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — One month of war, still defiant. With its government still standing and its outnumbered troops battling Russian forces to bloody stalemates in multiple places, Ukraine is scarred, wounded, mourning its dead but far from beaten as it braces for a second month of bombing, combat, casualties and resistance.</p> <p>When, on Feb. 24, Russia unleashed its Ukraine invasion force in Europe's biggest offensive since World War II and brandished the prospect of nuclear escalation if the West intervened, a lightning-swift toppling of Ukraine's democratically elected government seemed possible.</p> <p>But with Wednesday marking four full weeks of fighting, Russia is instead bogged down in an increasingly costly, uncertain and grinding military campaign, with untold numbers of dead, no immediate end in sight, and encircled by western sanctions biting hard on its economy and currency. U.S. President Joe Biden and key allies meeting in Brussels and Warsaw this week will discuss possible new sanctions and additional military assistance for Ukraine.</p> <p>The economic and geopolitical shockwaves — with soaring energy prices, fears for global food supplies, and Russia and China aligning in a new world order with echoes of the Cold War — have reverberated across the planet that still hasn't emerged from the ongoing crisis of the coronavirus pandemic.</p> <p>With his military-olive tops, rugged and resolute look and impassioned appeals to governments across the world for help, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has been transformed into a wartime communicator and No. 1 thorn on the side of Russian President Vladimir Putin. Addressing Japan's parliament on Wednesday, Zelenskyy said four weeks of war have killed thousands of people and 121 of Ukraine's children.</p> <p>"Our people cannot even adequately bury their murdered relatives, friends and neighbors, they have to be buried right in the yards of destroyed buildings, next to the roads," he said.</p>

Repeatedly pushed back by hit-and-run Ukrainian units armed with Western-supplied weapons, Russian troops are shelling targets from afar, falling back on tactics they previously used in reducing cities to ruins in Syria and Chechnya. Major Russian strategic objectives remain unfulfilled: The capital Kyiv has been repeatedly hit but not taken or even encircled.

More shelling and gunfire shook the city again Wednesday, with plumes of black smoke rising from the western outskirts, where the two sides battled for control of multiple suburbs. A shopping mall and buildings were hit, injuring four people, the city administration reported.

In the south, the port city of Mariupol has seen the worst devastation of the war, under weeks of siege and bombardment. So far, the Ukrainian forces' defense has prevented its fall. That is thwarting the Russian aim of opening up another permanent and secured land link from the Crimean peninsula, seized from Ukraine in 2014, to Russia.

Zelenskyy says 100,000 civilians remain in the city, which had a pre-war population of 430,000 and has been shattered by strikes from air, land and sea. Repeated efforts to get desperately needed food and other supplies to those trapped have often failed.

"They bombed us for the past 20 days," said 39-year-old Viktoria Totsen, who fled from Mariupol into Poland. "During the last five days, the planes were flying over us every five seconds and dropped bombs everywhere — on residential buildings, kindergartens, art schools, everywhere."

Zelenskyy, speaking Tuesday in his nightly video address to his nation, said efforts to establish stable humanitarian corridors for Mariupol residents are almost all being "foiled by the Russian occupiers, by shelling or deliberate terror."

He accused Russian forces of seizing one humanitarian convoy. Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said the Russians were holding captive 11 bus drivers and four rescue workers along with their vehicles.

The head of the International Committee of the Red Cross traveled Wednesday to Moscow for expected discussions with Russian foreign and defense officials on prisoners of war, the conduct of hostilities, aid delivery and other humanitarian issues.

"The devastation caused by the conflict in recent weeks, as well as eight years of conflict in Donbas, has been vast," Peter Maurer, the ICRC president, said.

A senior U.S. defense official, speaking on condition of anonymity to give the Pentagon's assessment, said Russian ships in the Sea of Azov added to the shelling of Mariupol.

The hands of one exhausted Mariupol survivor shook as she arrived by train in the western city of Lviv.

"There's no connection with the world. We couldn't ask for help," said Julia Krytska, who was helped by volunteers to make it out with her husband and son. "People don't even have water there."

Perched on the Sea of Azov, Mariupol is a crucial port for Ukraine and lies along a stretch of territory between Russia and Crimea. It's not clear how much of the city Russia holds, with fleeing residents saying fighting continues street by street. In their last update on March 15, Mariupol officials said at least 2,300 people had died in the siege. Accounts from the city suggest the true toll is much higher, with bodies lying uncollected. Airstrikes the past week destroyed a theater and an art school where many civilians were taking shelter.

Russian forces also bombed and destroyed a bridge in the encircled northern city of Chernihiv that crossed the Desna River and connected the city to Kyiv, regional governor Viacheslav Chaus said Wednesday. Deliveries of humanitarian aid and evacuations of civilians went through that bridge. Local authorities have warned of a humanitarian disaster in the city, with no water or electricity.

But as Biden embarked Wednesday on a four-day trip to Europe to shore up pressure on Russia, the Kremlin said Putin isn't finished fighting yet.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov insisted that the military operation was going "strictly in accordance with the plans and purposes that were established beforehand."

Putin's aims remain to "get rid of the military potential of Ukraine" and to "ensure that Ukraine changes from an anti-Russian center to a neutral country," Peskov said.

Officially, Russia is still insisting on the euphemism "special operation" for the campaign. It has effectively outlawed terms including "invasion" and "war" and police have carted away thousands of anti-war protesters. But as casualties mount and a quick victory is no longer in sight, Russia is having to adjust to keep up morale.

Under a law passed Wednesday by Russia's parliament, troops in Ukraine will get the same benefits as veterans of previous wars, including tax breaks, discounts on utilities and preferential access to medical treatment

Western officials say Ukrainian resistance has brought much of Russia's advance to a halt and that Russian forces are facing serious shortages of food, fuel and cold weather gear, leaving some soldiers suffering from frostbite. Britain's defense ministry said Wednesday the war in northern Ukraine is largely "static," with Russian forces trying to reorganize.

"We have seen indications that the Ukrainians are going a bit more on the offensive now," Pentagon spokesman John Kirby told reporters separately in Washington. He said that was particularly true in southern Ukraine, including near Kherson, where "they have tried to regain territory."

Russia's far stronger, bigger military has many Western military experts warning against overconfidence in Ukraine's long-term odds. Russia's practice in past wars in Chechnya and Syria has been to grind down resistance with strikes that flattened cities, killing countless civilians and sending millions fleeing.

But Russian forces appeared unprepared and have often performed badly.

The U.S. estimates Russia has lost a bit more than 10% of the overall combat capability it had at the start of the fight, including troops, tanks and other materiel.

The invasion has driven more than 10 million people from their homes, almost a quarter of Ukraine's population, according to the United Nations.

Thousands of civilians are believed to have died. Estimates of Russian military casualties vary widely, but even conservative figures by Western officials are in the low thousands.

Talks to end the fighting have continued by video. Zelenskyy said negotiations with Russia are going "step by step, but they are going forward."

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said he saw progress "coming into view on several key issues," and that the gains are enough to end hostilities now. He gave no details.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/22 L.A. first in US: average gas price \$6
SOURCE	https://www.fox5ny.com/news/los-angeles-is-1st-major-city-in-u-s-to-reach-6-gas-average
GIST	LOS ANGELES - Los Angeles on Tuesday became the first major city in the U.S. to reach an average gas price of \$6 or more.

That's according to fuel savings platform [GasBuddy](#), which reported the national average gas price in the U.S. beginning to decline since its peak of \$4.35 per gallon on March 10.

However, that doesn't apply to [California](#), where gas prices have continued to soar.

Gas prices across the country have begun to go down slightly, while in LA the average price per gallon is now over \$6.

Gas has risen steadily in the past few weeks due to rebounding oil prices amid the ongoing [Russia-Ukraine](#) war, but also recent refinery issues in Southern California amid a rise in seasonal demand.

GasBuddy says California also typically has some of the highest gas prices in the country because of [high gas taxes](#) and its cap and trade program, which assesses a premium based on emissions.

Amid this increase in gas prices, refinery workers at Chevron refinery in the Bay Area recently went on strike, pushing Chevron to find replacement workers in the meantime.

State Lawmakers propose \$400 gas rebate for Californian taxpayers

Democratic state lawmakers on Thursday announced a \$400 gas rebate proposal for every California taxpayer.

Democratic state lawmakers last week announced a \$400 gas rebate proposal for every [California taxpayer](#).

The proposal would use \$9 billion of the state's budget surplus to provide the rebate, which is expected to cover the [51.1-cent-per-gallon gas tax](#) for one full year of weekly fill-ups for a car with a 15-gallon gas tank.

Under this proposal, every California filer will receive a rebate—including those who don't own or drive a car.

While [gas prices](#) continue to hit record highs, some people in Southern [California](#) are now resorting to [gasoline theft](#).

According to [Long Beach PD](#), a group of suspects tried to steal fuel from the gas station on Redondo Avenue. One person was taken into custody as of Thursday.

[Prices for domestic and international flights](#) have soared along with gas prices, and experts say the rise will continue.

Rideshare companies [Uber and Lyft](#) are rolling out fuel surcharges to help offset the [rising cost of gas](#).

Uber's new fee goes into effect on March 16, which adds about 45 to 50 cents for each trip depending on distance and 35 to 45 cents for each UberEats delivery.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/23 Putin adviser quits over Ukraine; flees
SOURCE	https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/putin-adviser-chubais-quits-over-ukraine-war-and-leaves-russia/ar-AAVpfPN
GIST	<p>(Bloomberg) --Russian climate envoy Anatoly Chubais has stepped down and left the country, citing his opposition to President Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine, according to two people familiar with the situation, becoming the highest-level official to break with the Kremlin over the invasion.</p> <p>Chubais, 66, is one of the few 1990s-era economic reformers who'd remained in Putin's government and had maintained close ties with Western officials. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.</p>

	<p>Known as the architect of Russia's 1990s privatizations, Chubais gave Putin his first Kremlin job in the mid-1990s and initially welcomed his rise to power at the end of that decade. Under Putin, Chubais took top jobs at big state companies until the president named him envoy for sustainable development last year.</p> <p>Since the war, the government has stepped up pressure on domestic critics of the invasion. Putin warned on March 16 that he would cleanse Russia of the "scum and traitors" he accuses of working covertly for the U.S. and its allies. Facing economic meltdown, the Russian leader accused the West of wanting to destroy Russia.</p> <p>"Any people, and particularly the Russian people, will always be able to tell the patriots from the scum and traitors and spit them out like a midge that accidentally flew into their mouths," Putin said. "I am convinced that this natural and necessary self-cleansing of society will only strengthen our country, our solidarity, cohesion and readiness to meet any challenge."</p> <p>Last week, Arkady Dvorkovich, who was senior economic adviser to Dmitry Medvedev during his presidency and a deputy prime minister until 2018, stepped down as head of the state-backed Skolkovo technology fund after condemning the invasion. Dvorkovich, who's also president of the International Chess Federation, is one of only a few former senior officials to speak out against the war.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/23 Russia FM issues warning to NATO
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/world/russian-foreign-minister-lavrov-issues-cryptic-warning-about-direct-clash-with-nato
GIST	<p>Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov warned that if NATO sends peacekeepers into Ukraine amid Russia's invasion, that will lead to a direct military clash between the Russian forces and the alliance.</p> <p>"Sending NATO peacekeepers to Ukraine would lead to a direct clash between the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation and the alliance," Lavrov said Wednesday morning, according to the Russian state-news agency TASS.</p> <p>U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield on Sunday ruled out the possibility of the U.S. taking part in peacekeeping operations inside Ukraine, stating that the Biden administration will not send U.S. troops to the country.</p> <p>"The president has been very clear that we will not put American troops on the ground in Ukraine," Thomas-Greenfield said. "We don't want to escalate this into a war with the United States."</p> <p>"But we will support our NATO allies," she added. Biden "has made clear that if there is an attack on any of our NATO allies, under Article 5, that we will support those countries and defend those countries."</p> <p>The Polish outlet Onet.Pl reportedly gained access to a secret project at Poland's Ministry of National Defense, aiming to deploy peacekeepers from a number of NATO countries to Ukraine. Warsaw is expected to officially present it at the NATO summit on March 24. The U.S. will not participate but may agree to a mission involving some other countries.</p> <p>Lavrov's warning suggests that Russia would consider the presence of NATO peacekeepers a military escalation and a cause of war against the alliance.</p> <p>The war has dragged on for about a month as Russia's superior troop numbers have run into unexpectedly fierce Ukrainian resistance. The battle for the southern port city of Mariupol has grown increasingly fierce, while cities like Ukraine's capital, Kyiv, and its second city, Kharkiv, are effectively under siege. Russia has also targeted cities in the West of the country, not far from the border with Poland, where more than 2 million of Ukraine's 3 million refugees have reportedly fled.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/22 Russia G20 membership under fire
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/poland-pushes-call-russia-be-excluded-g20-2022-03-22/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON, March 22 (Reuters) - The United States and its Western allies are assessing whether Russia should remain within the Group of Twenty (G20) grouping of major economies following its invasion of Ukraine, sources involved in the discussions told Reuters on Tuesday.</p> <p>The likelihood that any bid to exclude Russia outright would be vetoed by others in the club - which includes China, India, Saudi Arabia and others - raised the prospect of some countries instead skipping G20 meetings this year, the sources said.</p> <p>The G20 along with the smaller Group of Seven - comprising just the United States, France, Germany, Italy, Canada, Japan and Britain - is a key international platform for coordinating everything from climate change action to cross-border debt.</p> <p>Russia is facing an onslaught of international sanctions led by Western nations aiming to isolate it from the global economy, including notably shutting it out of the SWIFT global bank messaging system and restricting dealings by its central bank.</p> <p>"There have been discussions about whether it's appropriate for Russia to be part of the G20," said a senior G7 source. "If Russia remains a member, it will become a less useful organization."</p> <p>Asked whether U.S. President Joe Biden would move to push Russia out of the G20 when he meets with allies in Brussels this week, national security adviser Jake Sullivan told reporters at the White House Tuesday: "We believe that it cannot be business as usual for Russia in international institutions and in the international community."</p> <p>However, the United States plans to consult with its allies before any other pronouncements are made, he said.</p> <p>A European Union source separately confirmed the discussions about Russia's status at forthcoming meetings of the G20, whose rotating chair is currently held by Indonesia.</p> <p>"It has been made very clear to Indonesia that Russia's presence at forthcoming ministerial meetings would be highly problematic for European countries," said the source, adding there was however no clear process for excluding a country.</p> <p>The G7 was expanded to a new "G8" format including Russia during a period of warmer ties in the early 2000s. But Moscow was indefinitely suspended from that club after its annexation of Crimea in 2014.</p> <p>Earlier on Tuesday, Poland said it had suggested to U.S. commerce officials that it replace Russia within the G20 group and that the suggestion had received a "positive response."</p> <p>A U.S. Commerce Department spokesperson said that a "good meeting" had been held last week between Polish Economic Development and Technology Minister Piotr Nowak and U.S. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo but added:</p> <p>"She (Raimondo) welcomed hearing Poland's views on a number of topics, including the operation of the G20, but did not express a position on behalf of the U.S. Government with respect to the Polish G20 proposal."</p> <p>The G7 source said it was seen as unlikely that Indonesia, currently heading the G20, or members like India, Brazil, South Africa and China would agree to remove Russia from the group.</p> <p>"It's impossible to remove Russia from G20" unless Moscow makes such a decision on its own, said an official of a G20 member country in Asia. "There's simply no procedure to deprive Russia of G20 membership."</p>

If G7 countries instead were to skip this year's G20 meetings, that could be a powerful signal to India, the source said. It has drawn the ire of some Western nations over its failure to condemn the Russian invasion and support Western measures against Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Indonesia's foreign ministry declined to comment on calls for Russia to be excluded.

Deputy central bank governor Dody Budi Waluyo on Monday said at a seminar Indonesia's position was always one of neutrality, but noting the risk of divisions over the issue said it would use its G20 leadership to try to resolve any problems.

Russia had a "strong commitment" to attend G20 meetings and other members could not forbid them from attending, he added.

Russia's status at other multilateral agencies is also being questioned.

In Geneva, World Trade Organization officials said numerous delegations there were refusing to meet their Russian counterparts in various formats.

"Many governments have raised objections to what is happening there and these objections have manifested themselves in a lack of engagement with the member concerned," WTO spokesperson Keith Rockwell said.

One source from a Western country said those not engaging with Russia at the WTO included the European Union, the United States, Canada and Britain. No confirmation from those delegations was immediately available.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/23 WHO: Covid cases rise for 2nd straight week
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/covid-19-cases-rise-2nd-straight-week-deaths-83616526
GIST	<p>GENEVA -- The number of new coronavirus cases globally increased by 7% in the last week, driven by rising infections in the Western Pacific, even as reported deaths from COVID-19 fell, the World Health Organization said.</p> <p>There were more than 12 million new weekly cases and just under 33,000 deaths, a 23% decline in mortality, according to the U.N. health agency's report on the pandemic issued late Tuesday.</p> <p>Confirmed cases of the virus had been falling steadily worldwide since January but rose again last week, due to the more infectious omicron variant and the suspension of COVID-19 protocols in numerous countries in Europe, North America and elsewhere.</p> <p>Health officials have said repeatedly that omicron causes milder disease than previous versions of the coronavirus and that vaccination, including a booster, appears highly protective.</p> <p>The Western Pacific remained the only region in the world where coronavirus cases are rising, reporting a 21% jump last week, continuing weeks of increase. According to figures from last week, the number of new infections in Europe remained stable and fell everywhere else.</p> <p>WHO cautioned that with many countries dropping widespread testing programs, many infections are likely being missed and new case numbers should be interpreted cautiously.</p> <p>In recent weeks, COVID-19 cases inched upward across Europe, prompted by the more infectious BA.2 subvariant of omicron and the relaxation of nearly all public health measures.</p>

	<p>WHO Europe chief Dr. Hans Kluge said restrictions in numerous countries across the continent had been lifted “brutally - from too much to too few,” noting that in recent days, cases were rising significantly in the U.K., France, Italy and Germany.</p> <p>Last week, British health minister Sajid Javid said U.K. residents should brace for a jump in COVID-19 infections but that the country was still “in a very good position” due to its high vaccination levels.</p> <p>Meanwhile, China's health authorities this week reported the first coronavirus deaths in more than a year as the country battles its worst outbreak since the coronavirus was detected in Wuhan.</p> <p>The semi-autonomous city of Hong Kong is also entrenched in a deadly wave of COVID-19, and the city of 7 million has recorded more deaths than mainland China during the pandemic.</p> <p>Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam said this week that authorities would consider relaxing some of its strict pandemic measures as cases begin to fall after weeks of rising cases overloaded hospitals and cemeteries.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/22 Gas prices: Europe gig workers strike
SOURCE	https://www.wired.com/story/gig-workers-fuel-strike/
GIST	<p>A YEAR AGO, Anna (not her real name) would spend eight hours a day driving for food delivery platforms Just Eat and Deliveroo to earn £150 (\$200 USD) a day in her home city of Belfast, Northern Ireland. Now to get close to that figure, Anna says she has to work 12-hour days. That’s before she subtracts tax, insurance, and fuel out of her earnings.</p> <p>Like many platform workers, Anna—who asked that we not use her real name because she’s worried Just Eat could terminate her account—says she is trapped between pay cuts made by delivery platforms, increased competition for jobs, and the rising cost of fuel. Anna relies on diesel, which spiked this month to a UK record of 179 pence per liter (\$8.95 per gallon), partly in response to the war in Ukraine.</p> <p>“The increase of fuel and all living costs have just gone through the roof,” she says. “During this time, Just Eat has dropped their prices, and it's just not right.”</p> <p>Platform workers who say their wages are being eroded by rising costs are going on strike this week. Anna is planning to join other Just Eat, Deliveroo, and Uber drivers to take part in a six-hour strike in Belfast on Wednesday, organized by the App Drivers and Couriers Union (ADCU). “We're just trying to get the price back up to somewhere where we're not working on a loss,” she says.</p> <p>The ADCU claims Just Eat has slashed its fees by 25 percent, a figure Just Eat disputes, although the company has provided no alternative number. That pay cut brings its fees in line with the “already abysmally low” rate paid by other companies operating in the city, including Deliveroo, according to the union. Deliveroo declined to comment on the impact of rising fuel prices on its workers’ earnings.</p> <p>Similar grievances among Just Eat workers are not only being raised in Belfast, where the company only uses self-employed couriers—they follow other protests already taking place across the UK. In March, Just Eat drivers in the southern English region of Kent also went on strike, demanding higher wages to compensate for soaring fuel prices. Just Eat and Deliveroo drivers held several strikes in another town in the eastern English region of Essex.</p> <p>“Everything is going up, but the amount they are paying us is decreasing, and they are hiring more people, so it is becoming oversaturated, and there are not enough jobs,” Just Eat driver Jimmy Zane told local news.</p> <p>The fuel crisis is sparking protests in another important European market for the gig economy: Germany. Workers for the Just Eat subsidiary Lieferando also went on strike on Tuesday in response to rising fuel costs. “Lieferando pays above-average mileage allowances with 30 cents per kilometer, which is the</p>

highest possible amount for tax-free payments,” says Nora Walraph, a spokesperson for the company. But this amount is no longer enough, according to Oğuz Alyanak, the lead Germany researcher for the Fairwork Foundation, a group that scores labor practices at platform companies. “With the increasing gas prices, this is now untenable,” he says. “This is way below the accumulating costs for a lot of the workers.”

Fuel prices have spiked in tandem with the cost of crude oil. During the pandemic, demand for crude collapsed, pushing prices down. But as life around the world has returned to normal, oil markets strained to meet demand, prompting prices to jump. In January 2022, the price of a liter of diesel at the pump was 177 pence, a 47 percent increase compared to a year earlier, according to British insurance company [the RAC](#). Petrol was also up 42 percent.

The fallout from the war in Ukraine has made the situation worse, as countries including the UK rush to cut ties with Russia, one of the world’s largest oil exporters. On Monday, UK fuel prices peaked at [new records](#).

Food delivery companies are not the only platforms affected. “I have to work an extra five hours a week to make up for the fuel rise,” says Abdurzak Hadi, who has been driving for Uber in London since 2014 and is also a member of the ADCU union. Uber spokesperson Matt Keirle says, “We know rising fuel prices are a challenge, and we’re actively considering how we can support drivers.”

But Uber is responding differently to fuel prices spiking in different markets. In the US, the company [announced](#) on March 16 it would charge passengers an extra fee of \$0.45 or \$0.55 per trip and claimed 100 percent of that money would go directly to drivers. In France, the company said it is tweaking the fare structure to increase the base fare. But in the UK, Uber told WIRED, it is still considering its options, asserting that driver earnings in the country are at an all-time high and that the increase in earnings is higher than the increase in fuel.

Hadi, however, disputes this. “My earnings are the same as last year,” he says. “But my expenses have gone up, and Uber is not covering that.” After expenses, Hadi claims he earns under £8 (\$10.61) an hour, below the UK’s £8.91 (\$11.81) minimum. “They are under an obligation to make sure I earn minimum wage after expenses,” he says, referring to the UK Supreme Court decision in February last year that [ruled](#) Uber drivers were entitled to the minimum wage. After that ruling, Uber said in March 2021 that drivers would be entitled to the National Living Wage of [£8.72](#) (\$11.55) an hour, although that number is [rising](#) in April to £9.50 (\$12.60).

The result of the spike in fuel prices means drivers are working longer and longer hours to compensate for the rise in expenses.

Until last week, Anna says, she was working shifts that lasted from noon to midnight. “You’re just burning yourself out, you’re working these hours to get a decent wage, and it’s just not sustainable,” she says. Last week Anna says she made the decision to cut her hours to part-time only, even though she was trying to save for a mortgage. “To tell you the truth, I’m completely burned out. I can’t do it anymore.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/23 Hong Kong world highest Covid death rate
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/5dgaz3/hong-kong-zero-covid-china-highest-death-rate
GIST	<p>From overwhelmed hospitals to overflowing morgues, the scenes from Hong Kong’s COVID-19 crisis were strikingly similar to those that unfolded around the world in the early months of the pandemic.</p> <p>Except that for the wealthy city of 7.5 million people, the sight of bodies piling up in hallways and around patients in hospitals emerged only this month, a year after vaccines against the virus became widely and freely available in the territory.</p>

In a matter of weeks, the contagious Omicron variant of the virus has infected more than 1 million people and caused more than 5,000 deaths, mostly among unvaccinated, elderly people.

The city is now reporting more COVID-19 deaths every day than it did over the first two years of the pandemic. The surge this month has driven the city's coronavirus death rate—36 per one million people on Sunday—to being the highest in the world.

But more than its ferocity, this wave of outbreak has stood out for how preventable it was, experts say. “This is an expected tragedy,” said Jin Dong-yan, a virologist from the University of Hong Kong. “We have appealed to the general public and the government again and again in the past one year—we need to vaccinate the elderly.”

More than 70 percent of Hong Kong's COVID-19 fatalities were people aged 80 and older, many of whom lived in elderly care homes. The same age group was the least vaccinated at the outset of the current wave of infections, with less than one in five people fully vaccinated.

In comparison, the overwhelming majority of elderly people are fully vaccinated in countries such as South Korea, Singapore, New Zealand, and the United States.

There's not a single or simple explanation for why older people in Hong Kong were reluctant to get jabbed. Karen Grepin, a public health expert at the University of Hong Kong, said misconception about safety was one big reason.

“Because of this concern over safety, which is reinforced by the media and the health system, we created this idea that you really have to be healthy or fit to be vaccinated,” she said. “We end up with this unusual pattern in which people who most need vaccination are amongst those least likely to get it.”

“I shudder every time I hear the sirens of the ambulance.”

With a chronic kidney disease and regular chest pains, 62-year-old Amy Tsang is among those with underlying conditions and therefore deemed at heightened risk from getting very sick from COVID-19. But the retiree has put off vaccination for months, precisely out of fear that her body, weakened by years of steroids use, would not be able to cope with the side effects.

“I wanted to wait till my body was stronger. But that day never seems to come,” said Tsang, who cooped up at home to avoid catching the virus. “I shudder every time I hear the sirens of the ambulance. It feels like the Grim Reaper walking past.”

One factor that contributed to the deadliness of COVID-19 among seniors in Hong Kong was their choice of vaccines. While effective, the Chinese-made Sinovac vaccine favored by the city's elderly population has proved to be less protective compared to the BioNTech-Pfizer vaccine if only two doses of either brand are administered.

A recent Hong Kong University study of local cases found that the BioNTech shots were 89.6 percent and 92.3 percent protective against severe illness and death, respectively, among those aged 60 and older when two shots are given. For the Sinovac shots, those figures were 72.2 percent and 77.4 percent, respectively.

The study also found that both vaccines are almost equally capable of preventing severe illness and death if three doses are administered. However, despite the recent increase in vaccine uptake, only about one in ten Hong Kongers aged 80 and older have received three doses of any COVID-19 vaccine.

Other experts have noted that Hong Kong's success in containing previous outbreaks, following China's “zero-COVID” approach, also gave rise to complacency and therefore a low inoculation rate.

Hong Kong's abrupt turnaround could hold lessons for mainland China, where only half of those aged 80 and older are fully vaccinated against the virus.

Most of China's 1.4 billion people do not have immunity from previous exposure to the virus and only received inactivated virus vaccines, which have proved to be less protective than mRNA shots like those made by Pfizer and Moderna.

Beijing is certainly taking notes. Having sent experts to Hong Kong and witnessed its devastation firsthand, mainland health officials have urged seniors to get vaccinated. Wang Hesheng, vice minister of the National Health Commission, said on Friday the outbreak in Hong Kong "taught us a particularly profound lesson."

China must hurry up and vaccinate its population or "we will regret it," Wang told reporters in Beijing. Overall, 87.9 percent of the Chinese population have received two vaccine doses, a relatively high level of uptake, although the number drops among older citizens.

Recent outbreaks in several mainland Chinese cities, driven by the BA.2 subvariant previously known as "stealth Omicron," have also given China ample reason to encourage inoculation.

Mainland China is grappling with its worst COVID-19 spikes in cases since the early days of the pandemic. Thousands of daily new cases reported in several parts of the country this month prompted authorities to impose lockdowns last week that affected 51 million people. Over the weekend, China reported its first COVID-19 deaths in more than a year.

Boosting vaccination rates would be important for China if it ever wants to relax its social distancing and border control measures.

In Hong Kong, where COVID-19 deaths have come down from their peak last week, the government on Monday announced a road map for easing some of its most stringent rules on gathering and travel as frustration from the public and business sector mounted.

The city's leader, Chief Executive Carrie Lam, has said nothing to suggest that the city would scrap its strict "zero-COVID" strategy and plan for a future with an endemic virus. But as Omicron has shown, it may not have a choice.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/23 China official: 1 of 2 'black box' found
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/terrain-rain-hampering-search-at-site-of-china-plane-crash/
GIST	<p>WUZHOU, China (AP) — A Chinese aviation official said Wednesday that one of the two "black box" recorders had been found with its casing in severely damaged condition, two days after a China Eastern flight crashed in southern China with 132 people on board.</p> <p>The exterior is so damaged that investigators were not able to tell whether it was the flight data recorder or the cockpit voice recorder, said Mao Yanfeng, the director of the accident investigation division of the Civil Aviation Authority of China.</p> <p>"The exterior appearance of the black box is severely damaged," Mao said at a news conference.</p> <p>Mao gave no information about the condition of the recording device inside. An all-out effort is being made to find the other black box, he said.</p> <p>Images released by state broadcaster CCTV showed workers placing a bright orange, mud-caked cylinder into a labeled, clear plastic, zip-close bag.</p> <p>Recovering the so-called black boxes — they are usually painted orange for visibility — is considered key to figuring out what caused the crash.</p>

The search for clues into why a Chinese commercial jetliner dove suddenly and crashed into a mountain in southern China had been temporarily suspended earlier Wednesday as rain slickened the debris field and filled the red-dirt gash formed by the plane's fiery impact.

Searchers had been using hand tools, drones and sniffer dogs under rainy conditions to comb the heavily forested slopes for the flight data and cockpit voice recorders, as well as any human remains. Crews also worked to pump water from the pit created when the plane hit the ground, but their efforts were suspended around midmorning because small landslides were possible on the steep, slick slopes.

The black box was found in the afternoon. The flight data recorder captures information about the plane's airspeed, altitude, direction up or down, pilot actions, and performance of all key systems. The cockpit voice recorder captures sounds including conversations and background engine noise during the flight.

Mao and other officials at the news conference said members of the air crew were healthy, the aircraft had a clean maintenance record, the weather had been good during the flight and the crew had been in regular communication with air traffic controllers prior to going into a dive.

Relatives of passengers began arriving Wednesday at the gate to Lu village just outside the crash zone, where they, along with reporters on the scene, were stopped by police and officials who used opened umbrellas to block the view beyond.

One woman was overheard saying her husband, the father of their two children, had been on board the flight.

"I'm just going in there to take a look. Am I breaking the law?" she said. The woman and a companion were then escorted away and reporters told to stop filming.

Another man, who gave just his surname, Ding, said his sister-in-law had been on the plane. He said he hoped to visit the site but had been told little by the authorities.

"We're just coming here to have a look," said Ding, adding, "My heart sank all of a sudden," upon hearing about the crash. He too was escorted away.

China Eastern Flight 5735 was carrying 123 passengers and nine crew from Kunming in Yunnan province to Guangzhou, an industrial center on China's southeastern coast, when it crashed Monday afternoon outside the city of Wuzhou in the Guangxi region. All 132 people on board are presumed killed.

Investigators say it is too early to speculate on the cause. The plane went into an unexplained dive an hour after departure and stopped transmitting data 96 seconds into the fall.

An air-traffic controller tried to contact the pilots several times after seeing the plane's altitude drop sharply, but got no reply, a grim-faced Zhu Tao, director of the Office of Aviation Safety at the Civil Aviation Authority of China, said at a Tuesday evening news conference.

"As of now, the rescue has yet to find survivors," Zhu said. "The public security department has taken control of the site."

China Eastern is headquartered in Shanghai and is one of China's three largest carriers with more than 600 planes, including 109 Boeing 737-800s. China's Transport Ministry said China Eastern has grounded all of its 737-800s, a move that could further disrupt domestic air travel already curtailed because of the largest COVID-19 outbreak in China since the initial peak in early 2020.

The grounding order did not imply any mechanical problems with the fleet, but was an "act of responsibility toward passengers," the chairman of China Eastern's Yunnan province subsidiary said at Wednesday's news conference.

	<p>The Boeing 737-800 has been flying since 1998 and has a well-established safety record. It is an earlier model than the 737 Max, which was grounded worldwide for nearly two years after deadly crashes in 2018 and 2019.</p> <p>Monday's crash was China's worst in more than a decade. In August 2010, an Embraer ERJ 190-100 operated by Henan Airlines hit the ground short of the runway in the northeastern city of Yichun and caught fire. It carried 96 people and 44 of them died. Investigators blamed pilot error.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/22 What are chances of a Kremlin coup?
SOURCE	https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20220322-what-are-the-chances-of-a-kremlin-coup
GIST	<p>With Russia's ground invasion largely stalled and stuttering, a minority view is emerging among some Kremlin watchers that Russian leader Vladimir Putin's days are numbered.</p> <p>"Whatever Putin does, he does not look as if he can survive for long," tweeted Anders Aslund, a Swedish economist and former economic adviser to the governments of Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Ukraine.</p> <p>Aslund believes a major power struggle is already evident inside the Kremlin. Others who hazard that Putin's position is becoming precarious point to the public opposition to Russia's war on Ukraine by Arkady Dvorkovich, a veteran Russian government official and a former Russian deputy prime minister.</p> <p>Dvorkovich last week told the American magazine Mother Jones, "My thoughts are with Ukrainian civilians," he said, adding, "Wars are the worst things one might face in life... including this war."</p> <p>"Wars do not just kill priceless lives," Dvorkovich was quoted as saying. "Wars kill hopes and aspirations, freeze or destroy relationships and connections," he explained.</p> <p>Other seasoned Kremlin watchers are not yet persuaded Putin is at any immediate risk, saying the opposition is mainly coming from Yeltsin-era oligarchs who have little political sway and are intimidated by the security strongmen around Putin. The strongmen are nicknamed "siloviki" and, like Putin, came into politics from the security, intelligence or military services.</p> <p>They share Putin's revanchist aim of reversing the territorial losses suffered when the Soviet Union splintered apart.</p> <p>"There is a general feeling that, objectively, a split is already happening among the elites: former Yeltsin oligarchs versus Putin's conservative elites. This isn't a confrontation or a political struggle; it is simply a case of two camps exhibiting opposing views about how to proceed in the current situation," according to Tatiana Stanovaya, an independent analyst and non-resident scholar at the Carnegie Moscow Center, a think tank.</p> <p>"The former has the economy in their hands and the latter control politics. The oligarchs are intimidated and under pressure, while the conservative elites are on horseback with drawn swords."</p> <p>Dvorkovich's voice has been a very rare one from within Russia's political upper echelons to express criticism of Putin's war on Ukraine. And he appears already to have been punished for the dissent. He was immediately labeled a traitor for his remarks by Russian lawmakers. And a few days after he expressed his opposition, he stepped down as chair of the Skolkovo Foundation, a high-tech fund set up to help diversify Russia's economy and to build a Russian rival to Silicon Valley outside Moscow.</p> <p>The Skolkovo Foundation also published a recanting statement from Dvorkovich, in which he condemned Western sanctions on Russia and derided a world order in which "Nazism and the domination of one nation over others is possible," a reference to the United States.</p>

Aside from Dvorkovich, no senior Kremlin-associated figure has stepped out of line. On Monday Dmitry Medvedev, the deputy chairman of the Security Council of Russia, who served as Russian president from 2008 to 2012 and as Putin's prime minister from 2012 to 2020, became noticeably more bellicose.

Medvedev has presented himself at various times as a modernizer and technocrat and might have been regarded as someone likely to harbor reservations about the invasion. But he has ratcheted up his support for the war and Monday launched veiled threats against Poland in an essay that dubbed "imbecilic" Polish leaders as "vassals" of the United States. He described Poland as the "most evil, vulgar and shrill critic of Russia."

And he echoed Putin's oft repeated grievances against the West for what the Russian leader sees as a minimizing by the West's politicians of Russia's role in defeating Nazi Germany. Medvedev accused Warsaw of trying to scrub Soviet "liberators" out of history.

"In Poland they dream of forgetting about the Second World War. Firstly, about those Soviet soldiers who defeated Fascism and expelled the invaders from Polish cities. The Fascist occupation is openly equated with the Soviet. It is difficult to come up with a more deceitful and disgusting rhetoric, but the Poles succeed," he wrote.

Only a handful of Russia's oligarchs and super-wealthy have spoken out against the invasion. Billionaire Mikhail Fridman, founder of the country's largest private bank Alfa Bank, was the first, calling for an end to the "tragedy" and "bloodshed." Metals mogul Oleg Deripaska wrote on Telegram earlier this month: "Peace is very important! Negotiations must begin as soon as possible!" And Oleg Tinkov, another billionaire banker, has described the conflict as "unthinkable and unacceptable."

Nonetheless, Ukraine's military intelligence agency has fueled speculation about the prospects of Putin being overthrown as a result of a Kremlin coup. On Facebook, the Chief Directorate of Intelligence of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine claimed it had information that a "group of influential people in opposition to Vladimir Putin is being formed among the Russian business and political elite."

Angry at the personal financial losses of the war they are enduring thanks to Western sanctions and frustrated by the lack of military progress on the ground, "their goal is to remove Putin from power as soon as possible," the agency claimed. It identified a top Russian spymaster, Alexander Bortnikov, who is one of five key members of Putin's inner circle, as a potential successor. "It is known that Bortnikov and some other influential members of the Russian elite are considering various options for removing Putin from power. In particular, poisoning, sudden illness, or other 'accident' is not excluded," the agency concluded.

There have been unverified reports that Bortnikov's star has been falling in the Kremlin and that Putin may be blaming him partly for the lack of military progress on the ground as the battle plans were likely drafted on the pre-war intelligence Bortnikov was feeding him. But that might also disqualify him as a potential successor for any in the elite who really want Putin out, a Western security official told VOA.

He said he "can't see any of the security people around Putin," men like Bortnikov or Nikolai Patrushev, secretary of the Russian Security Council, who worked with Putin closely for years in the KGB, turning on him. "If Putin goes down; they go down," he said.

Other Western intelligence sources VOA spoke with also were skeptical of the Ukrainian coup claim, suggesting it may have been made to sow doubts about loyalty within the top echelons of Putin's Kremlin. "Bortnikov has been a hawk, remember he has been a loyal intelligence apparatchik and is cut from very much the same Soviet cloth as Putin and has set about with relish suppressing dissent and has even justified Stalin's Great Purge," said one Western official.

[Return to Top](#)

SOURCE	https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20220322-can-russia-be-held-accountable-for-war-crimes-in-ukraine
GIST	<p>U.S. President Joe Biden has called Russian President Vladimir Putin a war criminal for the actions of Russian forces in Ukraine. Could Russian leaders be brought to justice under international law?</p> <p>What War Crimes Are Being Committed in Ukraine?</p> <p>Russia’s invasion of Ukraine constitutes the crime of aggression under international law. The primary charge against senior leaders of Nazi Germany at the Nuremberg trials and Japan at the Tokyo war crimes trials was “crimes against the peace,” meaning the initiation of a war of aggression. These trials resulted in the conviction of three dozen perpetrators for aggression. The 1945 United Nations Charter further embedded the illegality of aggressive war (as opposed to defensive war) in international law.</p> <p>Because they fall under the overarching crime of aggression, all uses of armed force by Russia on Ukrainian territory can be viewed as illegal. Moreover, the Russian military continues to commit various atrocity crimes, a category which includes war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide.</p> <p><i>War crimes.</i> The unprecedented media coverage of Russia’s invasion has recorded the commission of war crimes in real time. The Russian military has targeted civilian infrastructure including apartment buildings, hospitals, factories, stores, churches, schools, and cultural sites. Even where a military target exists, using disproportionate force while knowing that the strike will likely cause death or injury to civilians or damage to civilian structures is a war crime.</p> <p>Siege tactics to starve civilians into surrender or to force them to flee as refugees, which now number nearly three million, represent clear war crimes, as would any use of cluster munitions or so-called vacuum bombs on civilian areas. The use of a tactical nuclear weapon, which Russian President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov have implied is a possibility, would constitute a war crime because of the collateral damage to civilian lives and property. The use of chemical and biological weapons against any target—civilian or military—would as well.</p> <p><i>Crimes against humanity.</i> Russia’s invasion likely also involves crimes against humanity, which are those committed as part of widespread or systematic attacks directed at a civilian population, with knowledge of those attacks. Such crimes include murder, the forcible transfer of a population, severe deprivation of physical liberty in violation of fundamental rules of international law, persecution against identifiable groups of civilians, sexual violence, and inhumane acts of similar character that intentionally cause great suffering or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health.</p> <p><i>Genocide.</i> Prosecutors may also investigate claims of genocide, which requires the intentional destruction of all or part of a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group. Genocide includes not only killing, but also causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group (in this case, those of Ukrainian nationality) or deliberately inflicting on the group conditions calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part. Establishing the genocidal intent of senior Russian leaders, however, could prove difficult.</p> <p>How Might Investigations Proceed?</p> <p>The International Criminal Court (ICC), which has jurisdiction over Ukraine, recently initiated a major investigation after forty countries formally referred the situation to the prosecutor. In addition, the UN Human Rights Council is setting up an investigative commission, and certain governments, the European Union, and nongovernmental organizations are launching their own investigative efforts. This has resulted in the commitment of an unprecedented level of resources for atrocity crimes investigations in a short period of time.</p> <p>Whatever category of atrocity crimes is ultimately prosecuted, the clear top-down orchestration of the Russian military campaign will lessen the burden of proof for prosecutors. Additionally, ongoing reporting by the media serves as real-time documentation, thus making it difficult for Russian leaders to plead ignorance about atrocity crimes taking place in Ukraine. Nonetheless, they blatantly broadcast their</p>

aggressive intentions and, it appears, are doing nothing to prevent such crimes or to punish those who commit them. As a result, building a case against them could be easier.

What Role Could the United States Play in Seeking Accountability?

Although the United States is not a party to the ICC, it could have a major role to play, especially in light of President Joe Biden's recent assertion that [Putin is a war criminal](#). Washington could orchestrate the collection and delivery of information from many sources, including refugees, satellite imagery, and declassified electronic intercepts. In fact, despite long-standing opposition to the ICC from the Republican party, some of its leading senators have [introduced a resolution](#) supporting the court's investigative efforts. The U.S. military could also help by analyzing the "order of battle" of Russian troops, which provides useful information for investigators and prosecutors.

Additionally, Washington could support Ukraine in building war crimes cases against Russian soldiers and officers. The Biden administration could immediately lead an initiative at the UN General Assembly for the United Nations to enter into a treaty with the Ukrainian government to establish a special tribunal. This body would be able to prosecute crimes of aggression committed by Russian leaders, which the ICC lacks the jurisdictional authority to carry out. The UN treaties creating the [Special Court for Sierra Leone](#) [PDF] and the [Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia](#) [PDF] two decades ago serve as models.

What Is Russia's Track Record on Investigating Such Abuses?

The Soviet Union played a major role during and after World War II to investigate and prosecute Nazi war crimes, including the Nazi occupation of Ukrainian cities such as Kharkiv and Kyiv. Between 1943 and 1952, the Soviets prosecuted [an estimated eighty-two thousand people](#) as Nazi criminals or collaborators. Soviet officials were also instrumental in creating the Nuremberg tribunal and its prosecution of crimes of aggression. In the 1990s, Russia supported the UN Security Council's creation of the [International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia](#) and [Rwanda](#).

In recent decades, however, the Kremlin has not pressed for domestic enforcement of the laws and customs of war in connection with its foreign military adventures. As a result, it is implausible to expect Moscow to cooperate with the ICC's investigation of atrocity crimes or with any special tribunal established to prosecute the crime of aggression in the future.

In the Event There Are Indicted Fugitives, Could Sanctions Help Compel Their Surrender?

Economic sanctions will [primarily provide leverage](#) to compel the withdrawal of Russian forces and the restoration of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. If the sanctions are eventually lifted in stages, it could prove effective to include conditions requiring the surrender of indicted fugitives. This tactic served as a powerful incentive for the [surrender of indicted leaders](#) such as Slobodan Milosevic to the tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague. However, Serbia did not possess nuclear weapons, so attempts to use similar leverage with respect to indicted Russian fugitives shielded by a nuclear power would be risky.

Will Russia Have to Pay Reparations?

The enormous destruction of property and other financial losses will highlight Russia's responsibility to eventually pay for the reconstruction of Ukraine and give compensation to its people. The issue of reparations doubtless will be raised in negotiations to resolve the conflict and as an international condition for resuming any normal relationship with Russia.

Western countries will vigorously challenge any expectation by Russia that other nations will bear the entire cost of rehabilitating Ukraine. While the post-World War II Marshall Plan, which was led by the United States, helped to rebuild a devastated Europe, Russia should not expect such outside help this time. It remains a viable economy and society despite the international sanctions, and it bears direct responsibility as the aggressor nation.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/22 SPD still struggling recruit officers
SOURCE	https://publicola.com/tag/police-funding/

GIST	<p>The Seattle Police Department is still struggling to replace departing officers after two years of record-high attrition, according to a presentation to the city council’s public safety committee by Interim SPD Chief Adrian Diaz on Tuesday morning.</p> <p>Since January, SPD has only been able to hire seven officers to replace the 34 who left during the same period. Part of the problem, Diaz said, is that SPD is struggling to compete with other agencies along the I-5 corridor who offer similar salaries and benefits without the additional stresses created by his department’s staffing shortage. “We’re working people an extra two or three shifts a week,” he said, adding that perceived public hostility has also lowered officers’ morale.</p> <p>SPD’s greatest challenge has been recruiting officers from other law enforcement agencies. SPD seeks out so-called “lateral” officers because they require less training and bring specialized skills to SPD.</p> <p>Diaz told the council that his department has specifically sought to recruit officers from departments in the South and Midwest who might be drawn to Seattle by the promise of a higher salary. He also noted that few lateral applicants make it through the hiring process, in part because of SPD’s background check process. “We want to make sure we don’t hire another department’s problem,” he said. Ultimately, SPD only hired one officer with prior law enforcement experience—a recruit from Mobile, Alabama.</p> <p>Although the council voted to stop offering hiring incentives to new officers last fall, public safety committee chair Lisa Herbold expressed interest on Tuesday in “rethinking” SPD’s incentive program to focus on retaining experienced officers and attracting lateral transfers from other departments.</p> <p>One obstacle to recruiting officers from elsewhere, she said, is the cost of moving to Seattle; a new incentive program could cover moving expenses. SPD is also testing a new schedule that will place officers on 10-hour shifts for four days each week—another part of SPD’s efforts to retain officers, Diaz said. The department is currently negotiating with the Seattle Police Officers’ Guild to adopt the new shift schedule department-wide.</p> <p>Herbold also pointed out that the state legislature voted earlier this month to increase pension payments for police officers who retire after 15 or more years on the force, which she said “might have the consequence of encouraging officers to retire early.” A wave of retirements could be especially challenging for SPD’s detective units—already a fraction of their pre-pandemic size—which rely on more experienced detectives to investigate crime. Given SPD’s ongoing staffing shortage, Diaz has moved many detectives into patrol units over the past year-and-a-half, leaving the remaining detectives with larger caseloads.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Diaz said, SPD is also seeing fewer applications for its Community Service Officer (CSO) program, which the council voted to expand during last year’s budget cycle. SPD is currently using some CSOs to supplement its presence at the intersection of 12th Ave. S. and S. Jackson St. in the Little Saigon neighborhood, and Diaz expressed interest in using the civilian unit to handle calls that sworn officers can’t currently respond to.</p> <p>Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda urged SPD to search for more opportunities to shift responsibilities from officers to civilians. “Officers aren’t equipped to be social workers or housing navigators,” she said, “and having them focus on what they can do will help our retention strategy.”</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/22 How many Russia soldiers died in Ukraine?
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/22/how-many-russian-soldiers-died-ukraine-losses
GIST	It has been three weeks since Russia updated the official death toll to its invasion in Ukraine , leaving open the question of how many of its soldiers have been killed or wounded in the chaotic opening stages of its war.

In early March, the Russian defence ministry admitted that 498 Russian soldiers had been killed in action and 1,500 wounded, a large number after just 10 days of fighting that pointed to the danger of its attempts to take Kyiv in a lightning raid.

Critics said the official government numbers should be treated with scepticism. And US and Ukrainian officials have since claimed that Russia has suffered 10, 20 or 30 times as many casualties, claiming that Russian losses could rival the wars in Chechnya or Afghanistan. And amid an information vacuum in Russia, rumours have spread over the hundreds, or thousands more, who have been killed in the ensuing weeks.

“It’s almost a state secret,” said a Russian military commentator who asked not to be quoted by name to discuss the issue. “We don’t know exactly [how many people have died] ... at the given moment, it’s better to discuss other questions.”

Russian news outlets continuing to operate inside the country have largely stopped reporting on the death toll from the war, as censors have forbidden any discussion that calls the conflict a “war” or “invasion”.

But on Monday, the Russian tabloid Komsomolskaya Pravda, which frequently posts pro-Kremlin news reports, published a bombshell buried deep in a news story about the war: “According to Russian defence ministry data ... 9,861 Russian soldiers had been killed in action and another 16,153 had been wounded.”

Just minutes later, the line was gone. No other Russian news agencies reported the remarks, and it was not clear why Komsomolskaya Pravda alone would have access to that information.

Screenshots and archived versions of the deleted report quickly went viral, as critics pointed to the article as evidence that the Kremlin was suffering catastrophic losses in the month-old war.

The paper later claimed that its site had been hacked. “Access to the administrative interface was hacked on the Komsomolskaya Pravda website and a fake was made in this publication about the situation around the special operation in Ukraine,” the website wrote. “The false information was immediately deleted.”

With little official information, journalists have had to sift through local funeral announcements or search out morgue directors for clues as to the Russian death toll, while officials have accused anyone covering the topic of disinformation.

“The collective west is trying to divide our society,” Vladimir Putin said in a speech late last week. “Speculating on military losses, the socio-economic consequences of sanctions, to provoke a civil rebellion in Russia. And is using its fifth column in order to achieve this goal ... the destruction of Russia.”

BBC Russian on Monday published a report that said it had confirmed the deaths of 557 soldiers. That report was based on soldiers whom it could confirm by first and last name had been killed in the fighting. It remains the most authoritative account of the Russian death toll from the war.

Earlier this week, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, the US state-funded news agency with dozens of journalists in the region, reported that Belarusian hospitals had been filled with Russian war dead after weeks of war. It quoted one employee of the Homel regional clinical hospital, who said that more than 2,500 soldiers’ corpses had been shipped from the Belarusian region back to Russia as of 13 March. But it could not independently confirm that account.

Other estimates are far higher.

US intelligence officials this week gave a “conservative” estimate that more than 7,000 Russian soldiers had been killed in fighting in Ukraine since late February, a number that would exceed the official death toll among Russian servicemen for the two years of the first Chechen war, which is remembered as a particularly brutal and haphazard campaign.

And Ukrainian officials on Monday evening estimated that more than 15,000 Russian soldiers have been killed, a number close to the official estimates of Soviet soldiers killed in the decade-long war in Afghanistan. That war marked a considerable decline in the prestige of the Soviet military abroad and the pullout came just months before the fall of the Soviet Union.

Analysts have warned about taking that information at face value during a war where western countries want to emphasise the toll of the war on the Russian military while the Kremlin wants to downplay its losses.

In its edited story, Komsomolskaya Pravda also deleted a line saying that the Russian defence ministry has denied Ukrainian reports of “supposedly massive” losses in Ukraine.

It is a particularly perilous moment to report on the topic, as Russia threatens all publications that release information about the war. Several military analysts and NGOs declined to comment on the Komsomolskaya Pravda story because of concerns about a legal backlash and possible punishment for discussing unofficial numbers. But there are indications, including from open sources, that Russia is sustaining heavy losses during the fighting.

The Oryx Blog, an open-source site that tracks military-equipment losses, has reported that Russia has lost 1,666 vehicles in Ukraine, of which more than 800 have been destroyed during the conflict. Those confirmed destroyed include 111 tanks, 74 armoured fighting vehicles, 123 infantry fighting vehicles, and 312 trucks, vehicles and jeeps.

“This list only includes destroyed vehicles and equipment of which photo or videographic evidence is available,” the bloggers wrote. “Therefore, the amount of equipment destroyed is significantly higher than recorded here.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/22 Why Mariupol important to Russia?
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/22/mariupol-important-russian-forces-moscow-port-city
GIST	<p>For three weeks, the Ukrainian port city of Mariupol has been under siege by Russian forces. Between 100,000 and 200,000 people remain trapped in the city, which continues to come under relentless bombardment.</p> <p>Local authorities say 80% of the city’s infrastructure has been destroyed, some of it beyond repair. The city has been without water, electricity and heating, and it is impossible to count the number of deaths. This week Ukraine rejected Russia’s ultimatum to surrender Mariupol.</p> <p>The fall of Mariupol would be an economic blow to Ukraine and a symbolic victory for Russia.</p> <p>“Mariupol has a practical and symbolic significance for Russia,” Andrii Ianitskyi, the head of the centre for excellence in economic journalism at Kyiv School of Economics, told the Guardian.</p> <p>“It is a large port city and a base for Ukrainian armed forces. So if Russians want to have a land corridor [from the Donbas] to Crimea, they need to control the city.”</p> <p>Since 2014, less than 30km has separated Mariupol from the Russian-controlled separatist territories in the Donbas.</p> <p>Economic strangulation</p> <p>Mariupol is a metallurgical centre for iron and steelworks, heavy machinery manufacturing, and ship repairs. Ukraine’s largest steel plants owned by the country’s leading metallurgical group, Metinvest, are located in Mariupol. One of them, Azovstal, was badly damaged by Russian shelling this week.</p>

Ianitskyi said the Russian army had been targeting not only civilian infrastructure but also the economic infrastructure, with the aim of incurring as much damage as possible.

Mariupol is also home to the largest trading port in the Azov Sea from which Ukraine exports grain, iron and steel, and heavy machinery. In 2021, the main destinations for Ukrainian exports from Mariupol port were European and Middle Eastern countries such as Italy, Lebanon, and Turkey.

The port had suffered after the start of the Donbas war, having lost transit cargo traffic from former markets, including Russia. After the annexation of Crimea, Russia built a bridge connecting the peninsula to its mainland and unilaterally imposed restrictions for ships passing the Kerch Strait.

Symbolism and propaganda

There was also a symbolic significance, Ianitskyi said. In 2014, Mariupol, the second-largest city in the Donetsk region, withstood brief occupation by pro-Russian forces. After Ukraine lost control over the regional capital of Donetsk, Mariupol hosted the largest number of internally displaced people from the occupied parts of the Donbas, more than 96,000 people as of 2019.

Not only does Mariupol lie in the territory that is claimed by the so-called Donetsk People's Republic, an area recognised by Russia before the full-scale invasion, but it is also part of Vladimir Putin's vision of "Novorossiia" – a territory stretching across eastern and southern Ukraine along the Black Sea coastline that is viewed by Putin as "historically Russian lands".

Capturing Mariupol would also be a huge win for Kremlin propaganda, which portrays Ukraine as governed by Nazis and the war as "de-Nazification". The city has been a base of the Azov battalion, a former paramilitary unit with roots in far-right and neo-Nazi groups. Although they form the tiniest fraction of Ukraine's national guard, Russian propaganda has claimed Azov fighters were responsible for killings of civilians and destruction in Mariupol.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/22 Activists: Russia oil imports flow into US
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/mar/22/activists-protest-tanker-russian-us-ban
GIST	<p>Environmentalists have launched protests against a Russian tanker bringing oil into New York, amid a flurry of oil imports into the US before a ban on oil and gas coming from Russia comes into force.</p> <p>Activists from Greenpeace set out in two boats to intercept the Minerva Virgo oil tanker on Tuesday morning as it set about unloading its cargo in the port of New York. The green campaign group, which unfurled a banner reading "Oil fuels war" in front of the 50,000-ton tanker, had already confronted the Greek-flagged vessel on Sunday as it made its way to the port.</p> <p>"The oil and gas companies that are responsible for our skyrocketing gas prices are the same companies that are fueling conflicts and death around the globe," said Anusha Narayanan, climate campaign director at Greenpeace USA, who was on one of the boats. "A more peaceful, livable, and equal future depends on breaking our addiction to volatile and conflict-driven fossil fuels."</p> <p>The protest aimed to highlight how the US is continuing to import oil from Russia after Joe Biden's decision on 8 March to ban the intake of oil and gas from Russia in what the US president called a "powerful blow to Putin's war machine".</p> <p>The White House allowed a 45-day grace period for oil imports after the announcement, meaning that ships bringing fossil fuels from Russia won't be able to dock at American ports from 22 April. Some oil companies have decided to "self sanction" by not taking product from Russia, although there have been exceptions, such as Shell buying a heavily discounted consignment of Russian oil, before apologizing for doing so.</p>

	<p>This grace period is seeing plenty of activity, with a Greenpeace tracker showing that dozens of Russian oil shipments have headed towards the US and Europe. At least a dozen tankers that have left Russian ports have either unloaded in the US or are about to arrive.</p> <p>This includes the Kronviken, a crude oil tanker anchored near Houston, the Riverside, another crude oil tanker heading for Florida, and the Balla, a tanker bound for Los Angeles.</p> <p>Narayanan repeated climate campaigners' demand for Biden to invoke the Defense Production Act, normally used in times of war to compel companies to churn out weapons, to force businesses to produce more solar panels, wind turbines and other clean energy technology.</p> <p>"True energy independence can only come from renewable energy," she said.</p> <p>The administration has, however, been more focused on rebutting claims by the oil industry and Republicans that Biden has declared "war" on domestic fossil fuel production. The Biden administration has given out oil and gas drilling leases at a faster rate than Donald Trump did, although many of these leases on public land remain unused by the industry.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/22 Ukraine fights war of ambush, skirmish
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraines-troops-fight-war-of-ambush-and-skirmish-against-russian-invaders-11647951516
GIST	<p>BRUSSELS—Ukrainian forces have inflicted significant losses on Russia's larger and better-armed military—blunting advances by Moscow on several fronts—using insurgency-style tactics that take advantage of their grab bag of available weapons, say military officers from NATO countries.</p> <p>In a war of ambushes and skirmishes, mobile Ukrainian units have used their knowledge of the local battlefield and sought to hit Russian forces at their weak points, striking armored columns on main roads and undermining their ability to fight by disrupting supplies, say Western observers.</p> <p>But the Ukrainians' approach is more suited to choking the invading Russians in places they overextended than to mounting a major counteroffensive against massed forces, they say. That raises questions about Kyiv's ability to dislodge Russian forces from territory they have occupied in the country's south and east.</p> <p>Ukrainians' greatest hope of success against larger Russian forces, Western observers say, is in crimping the flow of Russian supplies of ammunition, fuel and food, which would limit Moscow's ability to fight or hold ground.</p> <p>"The Ukrainians are fighting a smart fight with a force that is far less well equipped" than the Russians, said retired Gen. Philip Breedlove, a former supreme allied commander in Europe for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. "They are fighting a skirmishing and rear-attack fight that is just bleeding the Russian army."</p> <p>NATO leaders, including President Biden, are set to meet in Brussels on Thursday and are expected to discuss how to boost support for Ukraine. Mr. Biden recently approved \$1 billion in new military aid to Kyiv, including, for the first time, lethal drones. The U.S. has begun shipping 100 tube-launched Switchblade drones that circle in the sky and then smash into targets.</p> <p>Ukrainian fighters say they need a constant flow of antitank weapons, also included in the new package, to continue to inflict losses on Russian forces.</p> <p>"The Russian tanks are like cockroaches. They keep coming," said Sr. Lt. Myroslav Hai, a filmmaker-turned-army officer who also runs a charity that for years has provided equipment to the Ukrainian army. "We keep hitting and hitting and hitting them."</p>

Further needs to sustain their fighting capacity range from protective gear to vehicles to air-defense systems.

Tens of thousands of ordinary citizens have joined territorial battalions in recent weeks and need body armor and helmets, as well as armored and unarmored pickup trucks, Lt. Hai said.

Ukrainian officials and soldiers also say they badly need more air-defense systems to shoot down Russian aircraft. The U.S. and its allies are seeking to provide Ukraine with [Soviet-designed systems](#) that they are familiar with, including an S-300 air-defense system from Slovakia.

While the ambush tactics are having success in the north of the country and have largely halted Russian advances around Ukraine's capital, Kyiv, Russia is having more success in the south and southeast, where it is more easily able to resupply large forces. Ukrainian officers and Western officials say Russian forces have sought to dig in around Kyiv waiting for fresh supplies.

Ukrainian troops are using a mix of arms [from NATO countries](#) and equipment from the arms industry that Kyiv amassed before [Russia invaded on Feb. 24](#), including the tripod-mounted Stugna antitank missile system and the light, portable Corsar missile system. The Ukrainians have also deployed modern Turkish attack drones to target armored columns, as well as large, Soviet-designed artillery.

The newer, man-portable systems allow Ukrainians to attack in small, nimble units from various sides and swiftly evade an enemy counterattack. Shoulder-fired antitank weapons—particularly U.S.-made Javelins and British-made NLAWs—have helped Ukrainian troops pull off some highly publicized attacks on Russian armored vehicles. The less-known Stugna is popular among Ukrainian troops because it can be fired up to 2.5 miles from a target—or more than one mile farther than a Javelin.

Ukrainian troops are planning attacks in part based on the weapons at hand, say Ukrainian fighters and NATO military officials who have observed their tactics. Gen. Breedlove noted one open-source video of an ambush on a Russian column in which the Ukrainians appear to attack armored vehicles from the side with NLAWs, which lack the punch to penetrate tanks' reinforced front and rear armor. Other attackers hit front and rear tanks with more-powerful Javelins, which strike vehicles from the top, where they are usually less protected.

Such open-source videos show the Ukrainians “are able to really use what they’ve got to fight against the Russian forces successfully,” a senior NATO military official said.

“They’re being very creative, very nimble. They’re using the security assistance that gets to them,” a senior U.S. defense official told reporters on Monday. “There is not a long shelf life for this stuff. I mean, it gets into their hands and they use it. They are being very energetic and very aggressive in the defense.”

The Ukrainians are capitalizing on Russia's problems supplying forces deep inside Ukraine, particularly those attempting to besiege Kyiv. Ukrainian forces early in the war halted and then began attacking a long supply convoy composed largely of unarmored vehicles. Other attacks elsewhere have hit supplies of fuel and ammunition, while Russian troops in many places have [looted stores and homes for food](#), according to Ukrainian authorities and accounts from witnesses.

Militaries need vast quantities of supplies, and delivering them requires large numbers of trucks, drivers and additional armored vehicles to protect the provisions. By hitting supplies, Ukrainians can effectively disable tanks and other heavily armored weaponry without attacking them directly, since a tank with no fuel, ammunition or food for its crew is of little use.

“Ukrainian hits on weak targets are very effective,” said Nick Reynolds, a research analyst in land warfare at the Royal United Services Institute, a think tank in London. “What they’re doing is compounding problems the Russians have created for themselves.”

	<p>Still, Mr. Reynolds described Ukraine's tactics as "a desperate defense" and said its forces will struggle to regain ground. Russian forces, particularly in Ukraine's east and southeast, have more direct supply lines from Russian-controlled areas. Moscow has been able to pour more and more-lethal forces around cities including Kherson, Kharkiv and Mariupol, which are easier for it to reach.</p> <p>Mr. Reynolds said that for Ukraine to make big gains, Russian forces would need to lose the ability or will to fight.</p> <p>"For Ukraine, regaining ground is dependent on morale and logistics collapsing on the Russian side," Mr. Reynolds said.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/23 Test scores rise: return to in-person classes
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/test-scores-rise-return-school-11647987427?mod=hp_lead_pos6
GIST	<p>The return to in-person classes this school year has helped students begin to learn again at a normal pace, a new national study shows, though many are still facing setbacks from months of pandemic-disrupted education.</p> <p>The results show that children are making strides to overcome the challenges of the past two years, though the study echoes others in reporting that progress is weaker among students who haven't yet learned to read and have only known a pandemic education.</p> <p>"Were there signs of stabilization? Yeah, there really were," said Gene Kerns, chief academic officer at Renaissance Learning Inc., which analyzed benchmarking test results from 4.4 million students from kindergarten to 12th grade in reading and 2.9 million students in math.</p> <p>The overall downside is that performance hasn't rebounded to pre-pandemic levels, he added. "There are not signs of a recovery if you define that as getting back to where we were performing before all this," he said.</p> <p>Districts across the U.S. use Renaissance's Star test to assess student performance throughout the year. The study, out this week, compared results from fall and winter to see how the second full school year of the pandemic is affecting student learning. The results come from schools across all 50 states and the District of Columbia that used the computer-based tests in both school years.</p> <p>Overall, students are performing worse so far in the 2021-22 school year compared with the prior year, in both reading and math. Fall-to-winter growth, however, improved this school year, and the gulf in scores from last year to this year shrank by winter.</p> <p>Monroe County School District, which serves the Florida Keys and uses the Star tests, fully returned to in-person learning this school year after being partially remote during 2020-21. Virtual instruction in the Keys, spread across 100 miles, made it harder for many students to absorb their math lessons, said Amy Stanton, the district's coordinator of mathematics.</p> <p>Now, with students back in the classroom and getting regular feedback from teachers and classmates, Ms. Stanton said, "Once the understanding hits, it's like a domino: 'I get it, I get it, I get it.'" The district has tried to inject fun back into the classroom, using hands-on games beyond pure memorization of concepts to help math concepts stick.</p> <p>Monroe County Superintendent Theresa Axford said that teachers were somewhat alarmed in the fall to see where kids were starting academically and emotionally, but that there has been steady progress since then. "Not every child is at the same level of proficiency, but every child can grow," Ms. Axford said. "When you see that, you feel like you're doing your job."</p>

Renaissance tracks progress through a metric called student-growth percentile, which is similar to the percentile measurements tracking a child's weight and height, with 50 marking the typical person. From fall to winter, the median U.S. student-growth percentile in reading was 48 and in math it was 50, both 3 points higher than the growth recorded last school year. To get fully back to pre-pandemic levels, the metric needs to surpass 50 consistently, Renaissance said.

In the early days of the pandemic, [math advancement](#) took the biggest hit, which some attributed to parents being less comfortable helping with the subject during remote learning. Now, students who aren't yet reading independently are struggling the most, with a median student-growth percentile of 35, indicating very low growth.

Making sure that the youngest students gain the reading skills they need by fourth grade, when reading begins to underpin most other subjects, is a concern shared by many educators nationwide.

Of students who attended programs at the Institute of Reading Development, a literacy organization, about 49% of those entering first grade this school year were reading below expectations, compared with 28% before the pandemic. It is a level that Josh Kizner, the institute's vice president for partnerships, said hasn't been seen in several generations.

Rena Gibbs, the coordinator of curriculum and instruction at the 3,500-student Cypress School District in Southern California, said: "They're just not coming with those sounds and letters and scholarly habits we're used to." First-grade teachers have had to go back to the basics of making sure students know certain letter sounds, such as the "c" in cat, instead of jumping straight into introducing short words at the beginning of the year, Ms. Gibbs said.

"We feel a huge pressure," Ms. Gibbs said. "We know if they don't have those early literacy skills by the end of third grade, it does not bode well for their future."

Mr. Kerns, from Renaissance, said that recovering from the disrupted learning will play out differently for each student, but that educators should look for growth above all else. "We can't undo a pandemic," he said.

Some administrators, including Dave Gibbons, director of curriculum at the 1,850-student Schuyler Community Schools in Nebraska, said pre-pandemic achievement levels can be reached again. He said coming out of the pandemic, he would like to teach fewer concepts at a deeper level, which he said could lead to "growth beyond where we'd been in the past."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/22 Uninsured: bills for Covid treatments, tests
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/biden-administration-to-stop-reimbursing-hospitals-for-covid-19-care-for-uninsured-11647955166?mod=hp_listb_pos4
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON—Some people without health insurance will begin getting bills for Covid-19 treatments and testing after the Biden administration on Tuesday starts winding down a federal program that reimburses providers for virus-related care for the uninsured and that officials say is running out of funds.</p> <p>The White House says it will end the reimbursement program, which started under the Trump administration and also pays hospitals and other healthcare providers for things such as administering Covid-19 vaccines to uninsured people, by the end of April because it is running out of money. The administration and hospitals are urging lawmakers to approve more funding for the program.</p> <p>The White House earlier this month pushed for \$22.5 billion in Covid-19 funding to pay for a range of programs, including the provider-relief funds and replenishing supplies of vaccines and antibody drugs. Congressional Republicans have called to repurpose Covid-19 money that states haven't yet spent, but a number of House Democrats have balked at using money promised to states.</p>

The provider relief fund, which was created to help hospitals and community health centers seeing decreased revenue or increased expenses because of the pandemic, was launched with more than \$100 billion in 2020, and later legislation added about \$78 billion. All of the money in the provider relief fund has been allocated, though it has not all been paid out, according to an official with the Department of Health and Human Services' Health Resources and Services Administration.

About 50,000 hospitals, doctors and other providers have submitted claims requesting funding from the uninsured program since April 2020, the federal official said. The program bars providers who receive the funding from billing the uninsured for the difference between the money they get and the costs of treatment, a practice known as balance billing.

In total, about \$20 billion from the relief fund has helped cover providers' costs for administering vaccines, testing and treatment for people without health coverage.

The administration said it will stop accepting claims for treatment and testing for uninsured people Tuesday, and the deadline for claims for administering vaccines is in two weeks.

After that, the medical bills for uninsured Covid-19 patients will depend on each hospital's financial-aid policy and their prices, both of which [can vary widely from one hospital to another](#). Financial aid is offered by most hospitals and is usually granted based on patient income, but hospitals largely choose their own cutoffs for eligibility. Some states set requirements. Prices for the same services are also sharply different across hospitals, with [the uninsured often facing the highest prices](#).

The White House said it notified Congress in February that the fund that reimburses doctors and other medical providers for caring for uninsured individuals would stop taking new claims in March.

Hospitals that have relied on the funding say they are still feeling the financial squeeze of the pandemic and that more funding is needed for the uninsured program.

"We support the administration's request for additional funding to ensure that the healthcare system has the resources it needs to continue to care for their patients, especially as we continue to manage Covid-19 in communities across the nation," the American Hospital Association, a trade group for the industry, said. States in the last week reported thousands more Covid-19 deaths, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University.

An agreement between congressional Republicans and Democrats to repurpose unspent state Covid-19 funds as part of a smaller, \$15.6 billion package was recently pulled from an omnibus spending bill after some Democrats balked at using the money originally intended for states.

Senior Senate Republicans say the administration hasn't provided enough clarity on where funding that has already been allocated is going.

"Unless it's paid for and it's something that 10 Republicans will vote for, it's hard to see how it passes the Senate," Senate Minority Whip John Thune (R., S.D.) said recently.

Senior administration officials said Monday that they have briefed members of Congress on the status of Covid-19 relief funding since October and held more than three dozen meetings with lawmakers from both parties since January about the need for additional money. They said that \$300 billion of the 2021 American Rescue Plan's \$1.9 trillion remains unspent but that \$240 billion of it has been promised to cities and states that have built it into their budgets and that the remaining \$60 billion is intended for emergency use.

Among health systems that benefited most from the aid are safety-net hospitals in states that didn't expand Medicaid, such as Harris Health System in Houston, which received \$196 million in relief funds for treatment of uninsured Covid-19 patients, according to [government data published as of March 3](#).

The cuts could prompt Harris Health to curb other services “to absorb the cost for what is a federal responsibility,” Esmail Porsa, the system’s chief executive, said.

An estimated 9.6% of the population, or 31.1 million people, lacked health insurance in the first six months of 2021, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The Biden administration has said that while Covid-19 cases have sharply declined, funding is needed to prepare for future variants and continue with vaccination campaigns and other programs to protect the public.

The White House says the lack of new congressional funding means it won’t be able to purchase a second round of boosters for the general public, should federal regulators authorize another dose of the vaccine. [Pfizer](#) Inc. and partner [BioNTech SE](#) have asked the Food and Drug Administration to approve a fourth dose—or second booster shot—for people 65 years and older, while [Moderna](#) Inc., has sought approval for an additional booster for all U.S. adults.

Administration officials say they also expect the funding issue to impact the supply of monoclonal antibodies. They are also closely monitoring a new variant, BA.2, that has triggered an increase in cases overseas.

“Our concern right now is that we are going to run out of money to provide the types of vaccines, boosters, treatments to the immunocompromised and others free of charge that will help continue to battle” the pandemic, White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Monday.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/22 Inflation changing tipping habits?
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/covid-inflation-tipping-11647881902?mod=hp_listc_pos3
GIST	<p>Consumers started tipping more during the Covid-19 pandemic, but that generosity may be slowing.</p> <p>Earlier in the pandemic, Americans—many of whom were cooped up and saving money while their local restaurants were losing business—were willing to tip as much as 30%. Given that restaurant employee wages were so depressed, consumers were willing to help pick up the slack.</p> <p>Now, data tracking the past 12 months from Block Inc.’s payments unit Square suggest that following widespread vaccine availability, evaporating mask mandates and rising inflation, tipping habits are changing once again. Among purchases made over the phone or online, the share receiving a tip across all types of businesses has declined to 84.4% on Feb. 28 from 85.7% as of March 1, 2021.</p> <p>Nearly a full year before, that number had jumped from below 50% during pre-pandemic levels to almost 90%.</p> <p>“Tipping norms overall seem to creep up over time, and it could have been that Covid just jump-started it,” said Mike Lynn, a researcher and professor at Cornell University’s School of Hotel Administration.</p> <p>At Chilo’s, a Brooklyn bar and taco truck, general manager Carlos Cruz has noticed a slight drop in generosity over the past several months. What used to be 20% tips have decreased by \$1 or \$2, he said, and customers don’t leave a tip for pickup orders at all.</p> <p>“There has been a shift of gears,” said Mr. Cruz, 41 years old, who has been working at Chilo’s for about two years and also oversees two other locations. “Now that the business is going back to quote-unquote normal, we have noticed that people are not tipping as well as before.”</p> <p>One place where gratuities are staying the same, and in some cases improving: full-service dining. Square’s data shows that the average tip amount remained around 16% for remote transactions, and rose on average to 21.2% from 20.6% for purchases made in person during the same 12-month period.</p>

As many eateries use Square's point-of-sale system for in-house transactions and services such as Grubhub and DoorDash for deliveries, the full scope of restaurant gratuities remains unclear.

Peter Dougherty, general manager of hospitality at commerce company Lightspeed, said U.S. restaurants using its platform saw average tips increase to 18.2% in February from 16.4% in March 2021, though that includes remote transactions.

"We do extremely well in tipping, but we have a very small establishment," said Malik Rhasaan, 49, chef and co-owner of Che Butter Jonez, an Atlanta-based restaurant that defines its cuisine as "refined ratchet," featuring menu items such as the B'More Careful—soft shell crab on a brioche bun, accompanied with potato salad or fries.

"It's a little intimate so I think people feel like there's no barrier between us and them, so they tend to tip a lot, and often," Mr. Rhasaan added.

The increase in tips during the height of the pandemic is in line with existing research focused on how people show monetary appreciation under different circumstances, said Kwabena Donkor, a behavioral economist and marketing professor at the Stanford Graduate School of Business.

In addition, a recent study by Federal Reserve Board research assistant Sarah Conlisk of taxi rides taken in Chicago suggested that people offer more gratuity when they perceive some sort of hazard involved with the service.

"That should be consistent with the case where if people go in-person to a restaurant, they would be more likely to give a tip that's higher than pre-pandemic time," said Mr. Donkor.

Things are starting to shift in other types of business as well, the data show, suggesting people are less inclined to leave a tip when there is no waiter or waitress service. Among remote transactions at quick-service restaurants, which includes cafes and coffee shops, the average tip amount declined on average from 17.2% to 15.2% from March 2021 to the end of February.

For the beauty industry, which typically sees its busiest days during the spring and summer, the average tip amount as a percentage of the total purchase has slightly declined to 24.9% from 25.4%, Square said.

Steven Garrett, 37, who owns Resurrection Cuts barbershop in Tuskegee, Ala., said he has noticed tips go down by about \$25 a day since he started using an appointment-based app that allows customers to book, pay and tip from their phones to avoid crowding in the shop post-lockdown. One of his regular customers who usually tips generously used the app for the first time recently and left a \$5 tip on a \$25 haircut, he said.

"I was like, man, if this was cash, this would have been a \$15 tip," said Mr. Garrett, who added that his barbershop has seen around an average 15% price increase on haircutting necessities such as razorblades, neck strips and nitrile gloves. Mr. Garrett has been hesitant to raise prices.

"The problem is, we're eating more costs on our end," he said.

The Square data don't track whether tips are fluctuating because of higher prices. However, Mr. Donkor said there is research that suggests overall gratuity rates could decline if inflation continues to rise.

Kashena Sampson, 39, said tips vary based on the show and crowd at The Basement East in Nashville, Tenn., where she works as a bartender.

The specific price also matters. When a beer cost \$6, people would generally leave at least a dollar. When the price rose to \$6.50, some people only leave 50 cents while others might leave \$1.50, said Ms. Sampson, an independent singer-songwriter who relies on tips to pay her rent, as well as release her music.

	“Sometimes I say, ‘Hey, when you’re getting a drink, you gotta include the tip in the cost,” she said, referring to what she tells younger customers.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/22 Gas prices rise fastest rate on record
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/gasoline-prices-shoot-up-at-fastest-rate-on-record-11647957303?mod=hp_major_pos1#cxrecs_s
GIST	<p>As summer driving season approaches, average prices for regular gasoline have been at record highs the past two weeks after going up for 11 straight weeks. Prices reached \$4.32 a gallon on March 14, according to weekly figures from the U.S. Energy Information Administration. They were \$4.24 this past week, according to figures released Monday.</p> <p>Those prices at the pump don’t factor in inflation, though, which reached its highest rate in four decades last month. Inflation-adjusted gas prices are at their highest levels since 2014 and similar to what U.S. drivers saw in the early 1980s.</p> <p>Inflation-adjusted gas prices aren’t at record highs. But if March prices average \$4.22 a gallon, as they have so far, they still show that motorists will have been saddled with the biggest month-over-month price increase since EIA records began in the mid-’70s. The next-highest increase was after Hurricane Katrina in 2005.</p> <p>Some regions have seen greater price increases than others. Nevada saw the biggest increase, with prices up \$1.15 for a gallon over the past month, according to AAA, much higher than the national average of 72 cents. The smallest change was in Maryland, where prices rose 28 cents.</p> <p>A number of factors can contribute to these regional differences, including gasoline specifications, which switch to summer-grade earlier in some parts of the country, like California. “Summer grade gasoline is more expensive to produce and may have contributed to a larger price response recently,” according to the EIA.</p> <p>Supply-and-demand dynamics also play a part. Gasoline inventories are below their five-year historic range in the West Coast region and above average for this time of year in the Midwest, according to the EIA.</p> <p>“The more the demand, the less the supply, the higher the cost,” said Andrew Gross, a spokesperson for AAA.</p> <p>Some of the main ingredients that make up the retail price for regular gas include costs and profits of refining, distribution and marketing. Taxes are another main component, and some lawmakers have proposed or enacted a halt on gas taxes amid high inflation.</p> <p>The cost of crude oil accounts for the lion’s share of what drivers pay at the pump, though.</p> <p>This means gasoline prices generally follow crude-oil prices, which have been increasing as U.S. demand returns to pre-pandemic levels faster than production. More recently, Russia’s Feb. 24 invasion into Ukraine has caused crude-oil prices to sharply increase over the prospect of tighter global supplies as sanctions mount on the world’s second-largest exporter of crude oil.</p> <p>The daily spot price for the U.S. benchmark crude oil topped \$100 a barrel for the first time in nearly eight years on March 1. When oil prices rose above \$125 in 2008, gas prices barely broke \$4.</p> <p>These elevated gas prices sting a little less than they did in the early ’80s, when inflation-adjusted prices were similar, because vehicles have become more fuel efficient. In 1980, new passenger vehicles got an average estimated 19 miles to the gallon, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. New vehicles today get about 25 miles to the gallon.</p>

	<p>So, while gas prices in 1980 and in March of this year are similar after adjusting for inflation, drivers need 25% less gas to travel the same distance today as was needed then.</p> <p>If oil prices remain at their current levels, any summer road trips might cost more than they have in years.</p> <p>“I think as long as oil is hovering around \$100/bbl, gas prices will remain elevated at the pump,” said Mr. Gross.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/22 Covid cases rising in Europe
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/03/22/world/covid-19-mandates-cases-vaccine?name=styl-n-coronavirus&region=hub&block=storyline_live_updates_block_recirc&action=click&pgtype=LegacyCollection#coronavirus-cases-are-rising-in-european-nations-because-restrictions-were-eased-too-soon-a-who-official-says
GIST	<p>Daily reports of new coronavirus cases are increasing in 18 European countries, including Britain, France, Germany and Italy, because the authorities are relaxing pandemic restrictions too quickly, a senior World Health Organization official in the region said on Tuesday.</p> <p>The official — Dr. Hans Kluge, the organization’s regional director for Europe — said the increase in new cases was linked to the recent spread of the highly transmissible Omicron subvariant known as BA.2.</p> <p>Rather than take a gradual, measured approach, Dr. Kluge said, the 18 countries “are lifting those restrictions brutally, from too much to too few.”</p> <p>Despite the most recent surge in cases, he said he saw reasons for optimism, because of the large proportion of people in most of the countries who may have some level of immunity either from a past infection or from being vaccinated. Scientists have cautioned that the protection against infection may wane over time, and future variants may be better able to sidestep our defenses. Dr. Kluge also noted that warming spring weather would help, as people spend more time outdoors and less in crowded indoor spaces where the virus spreads the most readily.</p> <p>Dr. Kluge noted that mortality from Covid-19 was still declining in the 18 countries, which he did not list in full. Even so, he said, the virus remains a deadly threat across the W.H.O.’s 53-country Europe region, which also includes Israel and all of the former Soviet Union. Some 20,000 deaths related to the coronavirus were reported in the region last week, he said.</p> <p>Countries will have to get used to the virus remaining in circulation at some level indefinitely, “but it does not mean that we cannot get rid of the pandemic,” Dr. Kluge said at a news conference. He spoke in Chisinau, the Moldovan capital, where he met health officials who are dealing with refugees fleeing the Russian invasion of neighboring Ukraine.</p> <p>To bring the virus under control, he said, countries in Europe should protect people who are especially vulnerable to the virus; strengthen their health surveillance measures to detect new variants; make use of antiviral medicines that can drastically reduce the severity of the disease; and take care of “long Covid” patients whose symptoms linger for weeks or months.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/22 Travel ban China officials for ‘repression’
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/mar/22/joe-biden-imposes-travel-ban-chinese-officials-acc/
GIST	The Biden administration late Monday banned Chinese officials accused of repressing ethnic and religious minorities from traveling to the United States.

	<p>In a statement, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the travel ban applies to Chinese officials who “are responsible for or complicit in, policies or actions aimed at repressing religious and spiritual practitioners, members of ethnic minority groups, dissidents, human rights defenders, journalists, labor organizers, civil society organizers, and peaceful protesters in China and beyond.”</p> <p>The sanctions expand visa restrictions initially imposed by former President Donald Trump in response to China’s treatment of Uyghur Muslims in the western region of Xinjiang and repressing pro-democracy activists in Hong Kong and Tibet.</p> <p>“We are all committed to defending human rights around the world and will continue to use all diplomatic and economic measures to promote accountability,” Mr. Blinken said in his statement.</p> <p>The move comes after the Justice Department last week charged five men with stalking and harassing Chinese dissidents in the United States on behalf of the Beijing government.</p> <p>Prosecutors say the defendants were trying to dig up dirt on the dissidents in order to stop them from speaking out against Beijing.</p> <p>The State Department has said “genocide and crimes against humanity” have occurred in the Xinjiang region against Uyghur Muslims.</p> <p>China has been accused of an intensified campaign of repression against Uyghurs and other minorities, including putting them in reeducation camps. It has allegedly destroyed mosques and shrines.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/23 Day 28 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/23/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-28-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ukraine’s president Volodymyr Zelenskiy accused Russian forces of seizing a humanitarian convoy near Mangush west of Mariupol. “Employees of the state emergency service and bus drivers have been taken captive,” he said, adding that 100,000 people remained in the city living “in inhumane conditions. In a total blockade. Without food, water, medication. Under constant shelling, under constant bombing”. • Russian forces are now inside Mariupol, a senior US defence official said. Two “super-powerful bombs” rocked the city on Tuesday even as rescue efforts were ongoing, local authorities said. • Ukraine’s armed forces say its military continues to defend the southern port city of Mariupol as well as Chernihiv to deter Russia’s advance towards Kyiv, according to a report as of 6am this morning. • Officials said rebels operating in Belarus against Russia’s war on Ukraine partially removed a railway connection between Belarus and Ukraine. The Ukrainian army also claimed that Russia has resorted to recruiting former soldiers to join its war effort in order to make up for heavy losses. • Russia’s combat power in Ukraine has declined below 90% of its pre-invasion levels for the first time since its attack began, a senior US defence official said on Tuesday, suggesting heavy losses of weaponry and growing casualties and describing morale issues, command-and-control problems, a reliance on conscripts and a stalled advance to Kyiv. • Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov refused to rule out the use of nuclear weapons in an interview with CNN on Tuesday. Peskov told the broadcaster that such arms could be used if Russia faced an “existential threat”. Russia has the world’s largest stockpile of nuclear warheads. • The Pentagon later condemned Peskov’s refusal to rule out the use of nuclear weapons. • US President Joe Biden will depart on Wednesday to fly to Brussels where he is expected to announce new sanctions against Russia and new measures to tighten existing ones.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The deputy head of Kyiv's police force has accused Russia of using white phosphorous munitions in the city of Kramatorsk in Donetsk. Oleksiy Biloshytskiy shared online footage, which could not be independently verified, of material burning fiercely underneath a pile of aggregate. "Another use of phosphorus ammunitions in Kramatorsk," he said. • Zelenskiy will speak virtually at the Nato summit in Brussels on Thursday, where US president Joe Biden is also planning to push for new sanctions against Russia. "Three important summits are scheduled this week: G7, Nato and the EU," he said. "New packages of sanctions, new support." • About 300,000 people in the occupied southern city of Kherson are running out of food and medical supplies, a spokesperson for Ukraine's foreign ministry said. Kherson was the first major Ukrainian city to fall into Russian hands since the invasion began on 24 February. • Russia plans to unleash a "great terror" on Kherson by kidnapping residents and taking them across the Russian border, an FSB whistleblower has claimed. The Kremlin was no longer willing to "play nicely" with protesters in the Ukrainian city, a letter said. • Russian forces have only three further days of fuel, food and ammunition left to conduct the war after a breakdown in their supply chains, Ukrainian military commanders have claimed. The statements were described as "plausible" by western officials. • Russian forces have "kidnapped" 2,389 children from the Russian-controlled territories of Luhansk and Donetsk, the US embassy in Kyiv has said, citing figures by Ukraine's foreign ministry. The embassy said: "This is not assistance. It is kidnapping." • The Ukrainian health minister, Viktor Lyashko, said 10 hospitals had been completely destroyed since Russia invaded. Other hospitals could not be restocked with medicines and supplies because of nearby fighting, the minister added. • The UN secretary general, Antonio Guterres, said it is time for Russia to end its "absurd" and "unwinnable" war in Ukraine, as the EU prepared to set up a "trust fund" aimed at helping Kyiv repel the invasion and rebuild afterwards. Speaking to reporters at the UN's headquarters in New York, Guterres said the war was "going nowhere, fast". • The United States and its western allies are assessing whether Russia should remain within the Group of Twenty (G20) grouping of major economies following its invasion of Ukraine, sources involved in the discussions told Reuters on Tuesday. • The war in Ukraine has killed 121 children so far, the office of the prosecutor general said on Wednesday in a message on Telegram, adding that the number of wounded children stood at 167. • The United Nations will face three resolutions today on the worsening humanitarian situation in Ukraine after Russia decided to call for a vote on its Security Council resolution that makes no mention of its attack on Ukraine.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/23 Zelenskyy: 100,000 trapped in Mariupol
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/23/ukraine-100000-civilians-trapped-in-mariupol-amid-russias-constant-bombing-says-zelenskiy
GIST	<p>Almost 100,000 people remain trapped in the ruined city of Mariupol, facing starvation amid "constant" Russian bombardment, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskiy has said, as he appealed for the release of a convoy he said had been captured by Russian forces.</p> <p>In a video address late on Tuesday, he renewed his calls for Russia to allow safe humanitarian corridors, and said civilians faced "inhumane conditions. In a total siege. Without food, water, medication, under constant shelling and under constant bombing."</p> <p>More than 7,000 people had escaped the city in the past 24 hours, he said. However one humanitarian convoy travelling on an agreed route west of the city had been "captured by the occupiers".</p> <p>The convoy near Mangush consisted of bus drivers and emergency service personnel. "We are doing everything we can to free out people and unblock the movement of humanitarian aid." he said.</p>

Tens of thousands of residents have already [fled the besieged southern port city, bringing harrowing testimony](#) of a “freezing hellscape riddled with dead bodies and destroyed buildings”, according to Human Rights Watch.

Satellite images of Mariupol released by Maxar on Tuesday showed a charred landscape, with several buildings ablaze and smoke billowing from the city. The Pentagon has said Russia was now pummeling Mariupol using artillery, long-range missiles and naval ships deployed in the nearby Sea of Azov.

“They bombed us for the past 20 days,” said 39-year-old Viktoria Totsen, who fled into Poland. “During the last five days, the planes were flying over us every five seconds and dropped bombs everywhere on residential buildings, kindergartens, art schools, everywhere.”

“It is clear that the occupiers are not interested in the city of Mariupol, they want to raze it to the ground, to reduce it to ashes of a dead land,” one local official said.

Amid the bloodshed, Zelenskiy held out hope for negotiations, which have yielded little since the invasion began on 24 February. “It’s very difficult, sometimes confrontational,” he said. “But step by step we are moving forward.”

For the first time, there are signs that Ukrainian forces are going on the offensive, retaking a town near Kyiv and launching counter attacks in the south of the country, amid claims that Russian forces have [just a few days of supplies remaining](#).

In the face of intense Ukrainian resistance, the Pentagon believes Russia’s forces may have been reduced by as much as 10% in the four weeks of fighting since the invasion began.

“The Russians may be slightly below a 90% level of assessed available combat power,” a senior defence official told reporters in Washington, adding that some Russian forces were suffering from frostbite.

The US president, Joe Biden, is due to travel to Brussels this week for Nato and G7 talks to discuss further action against Russia, including tighter sanctions. Biden [discussed Moscow’s “brutal” tactics](#) in a call with European leaders on Monday.

Biden will then head to Poland, which has received the bulk of more than 3.5 million Ukrainians fleeing war in their country. Zelenskiy will speak virtually at the Nato summit in Brussels on Thursday.

Amid concerns that [Vladimir Putin](#), who Biden believes has “his back against the wall”, is considering the use of chemical and biological weapons, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov spoke to CNN about the circumstances in which Russia would use nuclear weapons.

Speaking to Christiane Amanpour on Tuesday, Peskov repeatedly refused to rule out that Russia would consider using nuclear weapons against what Moscow saw as an “existential threat.”

US Department of Defence spokesman John Kirby said Moscow’s nuclear remarks were “dangerous” and were “not the way a responsible nuclear power should act”.

However, Kirby added that Pentagon officials “haven’t seen anything that would lead us to conclude that we need to change our strategic deterrent posture”.

Peskov also insisted that the military operation was going “strictly in accordance with the plans and purposes that were established beforehand.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/23 Long queues for Russians as sanctions bite
----------	--

SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/23/were-going-back-to-a-ussr-long-queues-return-for-russian-shoppers-as-sanctions-bite
GIST	<p>The lines for sugar in Saratov were hard not to compare to the Soviet era, part of a recent run on Russian staples that have revived fears that the Kremlin's invasion in Ukraine will lead to a virtual slide back to the shortages or endless queues of the Soviet Union.</p> <p>Bags of sugar and buckwheat began disappearing from local markets in early March, just a week after Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine. And when the local mayor's office announced that it would hold special markets for people to buy the staples last week, hundreds showed up.</p> <p>"People are sharing tips about where to get sugar. This is crazy," said Viktor Nazarov, who said that his grandmother had tasked him with visiting the special market last weekend to stock up. "It's sad and it's funny. It feels like a month ago was fine and now we're talking about the 1990s again, buying products because ... we're afraid they'll disappear."</p> <p>After an hour and a half waiting at the city's main square, he was limited to buying one bag of five kilograms, he said.</p> <p>Other videos shared on social media have shown fights for sugar in markets in other cities in Russia, all while officials have maintained that the shortage is part of an artificial crisis.</p> <p>"What is happening with sugar today is aimed at creating a panic mood in society," said the governor of Russia's Omsk region, which is facing similar shortages, on Tuesday.</p> <p>The sudden shortages are a first taste of what is going to be a hard year for Russia, marked by a massive economic contraction, high inflation and an unprecedented cutoff from the world for a globalised economy.</p> <p>"I think we are steadily going back to a USSR," said Elina Ribakova, deputy chief economist for the Institute of International Finance, indicating that the Russian government would likely continue to close off from the world economy. "I'm not seeing it as a temporary shock and then we're going to go back to the liberal democracy and reintegration into the world, unless there is a change in government."</p> <p>As Russian troops pressed forward in Ukraine, stores in some big cities have reported shortages of essential products such as tampons. Prices on imported goods, such as Tide detergent, clothing, or toothpastes, have also skyrocketed as the rouble tumbled in value.</p> <p>For the rise in price on basic goods, the government has blamed panic buying and speculators, saying it has more than enough supply to satisfy demand.</p> <p>"As in 2020, I want to reassure our citizens now: we fully provide ourselves with sugar and buckwheat. There is no need to panic and buy up these goods – there are enough of them for everyone," said Viktoria Abramchenko, a Russian deputy prime minister, in a public address.</p> <p>More worryingly, medicines such as insulin have begun disappearing from pharmacy shelves. Some polls have indicated that Russian doctors are facing shortages of more than 80 medicines at pharmacies, including insulin and a popular children's anti-inflammation medicine. Once again Russian officials blamed panic buyers, noting that most western pharmaceutical companies have said that they will not limit shipments of essential medicines to Russia.</p> <p>But as Russia's economy contracts, inflation is expected to skyrocket as high as 20% this year, said Ribakova. For ordinary Russians, she said, that would mean "poverty. Poverty and desperation."</p> <p>"People were so busy with just surviving," she said. "Getting basic drugs, basic foods, surviving on minimal pensions ... people are coming very skinny to this crisis. They don't have savings, they were</p>

barely surviving before, and now they'll be spending days in queues and lacking access to basic healthcare and drugs."

Natalia Zubarevich, an expert on the economy of Russia's regions, noted that the main reason for the recent shortages was not just the damage from sanctions but also the failure of supply chains and hesitancy to make big purchases while the value of the rouble remains so volatile.

"I understand that the instincts of the Soviet-Russian people don't change," she said during a recent radio show, noting how sugar was a traditional item to purchase during unsure economic times. "But I'd think like this: If you have a beloved pet, think about where the pet food is made and from what ... I was berating myself because I bought too little [medical pet food]. This isn't sugar. I should have bought more."

Thousands of employees have been affected as large foreign companies including Ikea and McDonald's have temporarily exited the market. Meanwhile, local factories and other employers have also begun halting production. Earlier this month, AvtoVAZ, one of the country's largest automakers, had been forced to halt production of certain lines of vehicles.

And Moscow's Sheremetyevo, the country's largest airport, said on Monday that it would have to furlough a fifth of its staff and halt further hiring as passenger traffic slows due to sanctions.

In the longer term, entire sectors of the Russian economy could be at risk, as the lack of access to western component parts could affect everything from air travel to production of consumer goods.

"Economic growth is sacrificed for the sake of this wartime economy," said Maria Shagina of the Finnish Institute of International Affairs and the Geneva International Sanctions Network.

The additional risks and volatility of operating in Russia now mean that many companies will decide not to reenter the market, she said.

And the recent exodus of the youngest and the brightest of the country makes it unclear who will step in to prepare alternatives.

"It is possible that a couple of years down the road that there will be Russian alternatives for products from Microsoft to tampons but it will take time to produce," said Ribakova. "And the question is who will produce that."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/23 UN chief: time Russia to end 'absurd' war
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/22/eu-aims-to-set-up-trust-fund-for-reconstruction-of-democratic-ukraine
GIST	<p>The UN secretary general, Antonio Guterres, has said it is time for Russia to end its "absurd" and "unwinnable" war in Ukraine, as the EU prepared to set up a "trust fund" aimed at helping Kyiv repel the invasion and rebuild afterwards.</p> <p>Speaking to reporters at the UN's headquarters in New York, Guterres said the war was "going nowhere, fast". For more than two weeks, the devastated southern city of Mariupol had been encircled by Russian forces, bombed and shelled, he said.</p> <p>"For what?" he asked. "Even if Mariupol falls, Ukraine cannot be conquered city by city, street by street, house by house." Guterres said the only outcome of more fighting would be "more suffering, more destruction and more horror".</p>

Negotiators from Moscow and Kyiv have held several rounds of peace talks that have so far made little headway towards ending nearly four weeks of fighting, which have left thousands dead and displaced more than 10 million people.

“There is enough on the table to cease hostilities now and seriously negotiate now,” he said. “This war is unwinnable. Sooner or later, it will have to move from the battlefield to the peace table. That is inevitable.”

Leaders from the 27-nation EU will gather in Brussels on Thursday, meanwhile, to discuss the bloc’s further response to Moscow’s onslaught, including a longer-term financial support mechanism for Ukraine beyond €1.2bn (£1bn) in emergency funding already agreed.

According to a draft document seen by Agence-France Presse, the EU will commit to “provide support to the Ukrainian government for its immediate needs and, once the Russian onslaught has ceased, for the reconstruction of a democratic Ukraine”.

The document did not provide details on the size of the Ukraine solidarity trust fund or how it might work, but said the European council expected preparations to start “without delay” and would call an international conference to raise cash.

The US president, Joe Biden, is also due to travel to Brussels this week for Nato and G7 talks to discuss further action, including tighter sanctions on Russia. Biden [discussed Moscow’s “brutal” tactics](#) in a call with European leaders on Monday.

Boris Johnson is expected to tell allies at the Nato summit that there is an immediate imperative to support the Ukrainians now, and that the Russian tactics using indiscriminate fire on civilian centres is inherently escalatory.

The UK will make the case that new action is needed amid Russia’s increased bombardment of cities such as Mariupol, and urge allies that they should consider this an escalation that requires a response including an increase in the flow of weapons to Ukraine that would improve their ability to resist.

Western officials are keen to avoid a view forming amongst allies that only use of chemical or biological weapons are considered a further escalation, rather than the increased indiscriminate shelling into civilian populations, which the UK believes could merit a further response.

The Commission on Wednesday will also set out plans to ensure that the more than 3.5 million refugees who have fled the Russian invasion have access to jobs, education and housing, vice-president Maros Sefcovic said on Tuesday.

The bloc’s initial actions focused on receiving Ukrainians at the border, but “now we must ensure the right resources are in place to meet their needs,” Sefcovic said after a meeting of European affairs ministers in Brussels.

Addressing the Italian parliament in Rome, the Ukrainian president, [Volodymyr Zelenskiy](#), said that for Russian forces “Ukraine is the gates of Europe, where they want to break in, but barbarism must not be allowed to pass”. He again called for more help to defeat his country’s invaders.

Zelenskiy warned that one potential consequence of the war was “[famine that is approaching](#) for some countries”. Ukraine had “always been one of the largest food exporters”, he said, “but how can we sow crops under the strikes of Russian artillery?”

In an interview with European broadcasters late on Monday, Zelenskiy said an end to the war would only be negotiated if he met Russia’s president, Vladimir Putin, and repeated his acknowledgement that Ukraine could [not now secure Nato membership](#).

	<p>Responding to the Ukrainian leader, Italy's prime minister, Mario Draghi, said Ukraine had offered "heroic" resistance to the invading Russian forces and Italy would support its bid to join the EU, which Kyiv has long said it wants to do.</p> <p>Draghi said EU accession was a lengthy process because of the reforms needed to integrate fully with the bloc, but added: "I want to say to President Zelenskiy that Italy is at Ukraine's side in this process. Italy wants Ukraine in the EU."</p> <p>The EU has collectively imposed several rounds of sanctions on Moscow and agreed €1bn in financing for weapons for Ukraine's military, but cracks are beginning to appear in the bloc's unity over further measures, including a ban on Russia's key energy exports.</p> <p>Combined western sanctions have cut Russia out of most international trade to a degree never imposed on such a large economy, but exceptions have been carved out for Russian energy exports to Europe, its biggest oil and gas customer.</p> <p>Several member states insist they still rely too heavily on Russian gas and oil to be able halt all energy imports immediately.</p> <p>In an effort to cut EU consumption of Russian gas, leaders are also set to agree at this week's Brussels summit to collectively buy gas, LNG and hydrogen elsewhere.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/22 Ukraine: Russia forces 3 days supplies left
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/22/russian-invaders-have-three-days-of-supplies-left-says-ukraine-military
GIST	<p>Russian forces have only three further days of fuel, food and ammunition left to conduct the war after a breakdown in their supply chains, Ukrainian military commanders have alleged.</p> <p>The claims of major shortages were described as "plausible" by western officials although they said they were unable to corroborate the analysis.</p> <p>The report from the Ukrainian armed forces general command was said to be consistent with evidence that the Russian advance had stalled, and that they had reverted to using "indiscriminate and attritional" artillery attacks on civilians.</p> <p>"We do think that the Russian forces have used a lot of material including particular categories of weapons and we have seen isolated reports of particular units that have lacked supplies of one sort or another," the official said.</p> <p>"It is consistent with an advance which has ground to a halt. Failures in the logistic chain has been one of the reasons they have not been as effective as they hoped."</p> <p>A Pentagon official added there were continuing morale issues among Russian troops, with food and fuel shortages, as well as frostbite due to a lack of adequate clothing.</p> <p>"They're struggling on many fronts," the US official said.</p> <p>The Ukrainian military said that a major problem for the Russian advance was a failure to lay down a fuel pipe to the front, although the claim could not be independently verified.</p> <p>On Monday, Komsomolskaya Pravda, the pro-Kremlin tabloid, reported that according to Russian defence ministry numbers, 9,861 Russian soldiers had been killed in Ukraine and 16,153 were injured. The death toll was swiftly removed from the newspaper's website.</p>

	<p>Western officials said they believed the numbers cited by the newspaper are a “reasonable estimate”. The official said: “It is a level of casualties that has not been experienced [by Russia] really since the second world war. It is still continuing ... it is a conflict on a different scale.”</p> <p>While Vladimir Putin’s forces have struggled around Kyiv, a senior US official said the fighting had been taken to the streets in Mariupol, where many civilians remain trapped among rotting corpses and flattened buildings.</p> <p>Two “super powerful bombs” hit the city on Tuesday even as rescue efforts were ongoing, local authorities said. The port city is said to be under naval shelling from ships in the Sea of Azov.</p> <p>Russians are said to want to be able to declare Mariupol as a first strategic victory. The city is seen as key to securing a Russian corridor between the separatist Donbas region and illegally annexed Crimea.</p> <p>It is also home to the largest trading port in the Azov Sea from which Ukraine exports grain, iron and steel, and heavy machinery. The US military said, however, that it has not seen any signs that chemical weapons were being prepared for imminent use.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/22 Storm, tornado tears through New Orleans
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/tornado-tears-through-new-orleans-as-storms-hit-deep-south
GIST	<p>NEW ORLEANS (AP) - A tornado tore through parts of New Orleans on Tuesday night, spawned by a storm that produced multiple tornadoes through parts of Texas and Oklahoma, killing one person and causing multiple injuries and widespread damage.</p> <p>The National Weather Service retweeted a video of the tornado in the eastern part of New Orleans that was visible in the darkened sky.</p> <p>The tornado appeared to start in a New Orleans suburb and then move east across the Mississippi River into the Lower 9th Ward of New Orleans and parts of St. Bernard Parish before moving northeast.</p> <p>Guy McGinnis, president of St. Bernard Parish, told WWL-TV that the parish had "widespread damage" in parts of the parish that borders New Orleans to the east. Search and rescue teams were going through homes looking for people and responding to at least two calls from people who said they were trapped in their homes in their bathrooms.</p> <p>"As of right now no major injuries are reported," McGinnis said. "It's going to be a long night."</p> <p>It wasn't immediately known whether anyone was injured. While the metropolitan region is often struck by severe weather and heavy rains, it's rare that a tornado moves through the city.</p> <p>High winds uprooted trees in Ridgeland, Mississippi, as a possible tornado passed the Jackson-area city Tuesday afternoon, but there were no immediate reports of any injuries or serious damage to buildings. Campus police at Mississippi State University, in Starkville, shared a photo of a large hardwood tree lying across a street.</p> <p>Many schools were closing early or canceling after-school activities Tuesday in parts of Louisiana and Mississippi to allow students to get home before the weather deteriorated. Shelters opened for residents who needed a place to stay while the storms traveled through.</p> <p>High water posed a threat to motorists early Tuesday in Louisiana on several roads, including a stretch of Interstate 20 and several state highways after rains overnight, authorities said. Deputies in Caddo Parish, which includes Shreveport, rescued three drivers from high waters during the night, the sheriff's office tweeted before dawn.</p>

	<p>The storms were expected to intensify throughout the day as temperatures rise, increasing the threat of tornadoes, hail and strong winds. Forecasters predicted intense tornadoes and damaging winds, some hurricane-force with speeds of 75 mph (120 kph) or greater, in much of Mississippi, southern and eastern Louisiana, and western Alabama. Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and Jackson, Mississippi, were among the cities at risk for bad weather.</p> <p>The system dumped heavy rain, downed trees and prompted multiple tornado warnings as it moved into Alabama Tuesday evening. The roofs of several homes were damaged in Toxey, Alabama, after a storm preceded by tornado warnings passed through the area, the National Weather Service tweeted.</p> <p>Louisiana's federal and state authorities reminded thousands of hurricane survivors living in government-provided mobile homes and recreational vehicle trailers to have an evacuation plan because the structures might not withstand the expected weather. More than 8,000 households live in such temporary quarters, officials said.</p> <p>In Texas, several tornadoes were reported Monday along the Interstate 35 corridor, particularly in the Austin suburbs of Round Rock and Elgin, as well as in northern and eastern Texas and southern Oklahoma.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/22 Nations retreat from globalization
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/22/us/politics/russia-china-global-economy.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — When the Cold War ended, governments and companies believed that stronger global economic ties would lead to greater stability. But the Ukraine war and the pandemic are pushing the world in the opposite direction and upending those ideas.</p> <p>Important parts of the integrated economy are unwinding. American and European officials are now using sanctions to sever major parts of the Russian economy — the 11th largest in the world — from global commerce, and hundreds of Western companies have halted operations in Russia on their own. Amid the pandemic, companies are reorganizing how they obtain their goods because of soaring costs and unpredictable delays in global supply chains.</p> <p>Western officials and executives are also rethinking how they do business with China, the world's second-largest economy, as geopolitical tensions and the Chinese Communist Party's human rights abuses and use of advanced technology to reinforce autocratic control make corporate dealings more fraught.</p> <p>The moves reverse core tenets of post-Cold War economic and foreign policies forged by the United States and its allies that were even adopted by rivals like Russia and China.</p> <p>“What we’re headed toward is a more divided world economically that will mirror what is clearly a more divided world politically,” said Edward Alden, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. “I don’t think economic integration survives a period of political disintegration.”</p> <p>“Does globalization and economic interdependence reduce conflict?” he added. “I think the answer is yes, until it doesn’t.”</p> <p>Opposition to globalization gained momentum with the Trump administration’s trade policies and “America First” drive, and as the progressive left became more powerful. But the pandemic and President Vladimir V. Putin’s invasion of Ukraine have brought into sharp relief the uncertainty of the existing economic order.</p> <p>President Biden warned President Xi Jinping of China on Friday that there would be “consequences” if Beijing gave material aid to Russia for the war in Ukraine, an implicit threat of sanctions. China has criticized sanctions on Russia, and Le Yucheng, the vice foreign minister, said in a speech on</p>

[Saturday](#) that “globalization should not be weaponized.” Yet China [increasingly has imposed](#) economic punishments — [Lithuania](#), [Norway](#), Australia, Japan and [South Korea](#) have been among the targets.

The result of all the disruptions may well be a fracturing of the world into economic blocs, as countries and companies gravitate to ideological corners with distinct markets and pools of labor, as they did in much of the 20th century.

Mr. Biden already frames his foreign policy in ideological terms, as a mission of unifying democracies against autocracies. Mr. Biden also says he is enacting a foreign policy for middle-class Americans, and central to that is getting companies to move critical supply chains and manufacturing out of China.

The goal is given urgency by the hobbling of those global links over two years of the pandemic, which has brought about a realization among the world’s most powerful companies that they need to focus on not just efficiency and cost, but also resiliency. This month, lockdowns China imposed to contain Covid-19 outbreaks have once again threatened to stall global supply chains.

The economic impact of such a change is highly uncertain. The emergence of new economic blocs could accelerate a massive reorganization in financial flows and supply chains, potentially slowing growth, leading to some shortages and raising prices for consumers in the short term. But the longer-term effects on global growth, worker wages and supplies of goods are harder to assess.

The war has set in motion “deglobalization forces that could have profound and unpredictable effects,” said Laurence Boone, the chief economist of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

For decades, executives have pushed for globalization to expand their markets and to exploit cheap labor and lax environmental standards. China especially has benefited from this, while Russia profits from its exports of minerals and energy. They tap into enormous economies: The Group of 7 industrialized nations make up more than 50 percent of the global economy, while China and Russia together account for about 20 percent.

Trade and business ties between the United States and China [are still robust](#), despite steadily worsening relations. But with the new Western sanctions on Russia, many nations that are not staunch partners of America are now more aware of the perils of being economically tied to the United States and its allies.

If Mr. Xi and Mr. Putin organize their own economic coalition, they could bring in other nations seeking to shield themselves from Western sanctions — a tool that all recent U.S. presidents have used.

“Your interdependence can be weaponized against you,” said Dani Rodrik, a professor of international political economy at Harvard Kennedy School. “That’s a lesson that I imagine many countries are beginning to internalize.”

The Ukraine war, he added, has “probably put a nail in the coffin of hyperglobalization.”

China and, increasingly, Russia have taken steps to wall off their societies, including erecting strict censorship mechanisms on their internet networks, which have cut off their citizens from foreign perspectives and some commerce. China is on a drive to make critical industries self-sufficient, including for technologies like semiconductors.

And China has been in talks with Saudi Arabia [to pay for some oil purchases](#) in China’s currency, the renminbi, The Wall Street Journal reported; Russia [was in similar discussions with India](#). The efforts show a desire by those governments to move away from dollar-based transactions, a foundation of American global economic power.

For decades, prominent U.S. officials and strategists asserted that a globalized economy was a pillar of what they call the rules-based international order, and that trade and financial ties would prevent major

powers from going to war. The United States helped usher China into the World Trade Organization in 2001 in a bid to bring its economic behavior — and, some officials hoped, its political system — more in line with the West. Russia joined the organization in 2012.

But Mr. Putin's war and China's recent [aggressive actions](#) in Asia have challenged those notions.

"The whole idea of the liberal international order was that economic interdependence would prevent conflict of this kind," said Alina Polyakova, president of the Center for European Policy Analysis, a research group in Washington. "If you tie yourselves to each other, which was the European model after the Second World War, the disincentives would be so painful if you went to war that no one in their right mind would do it. Well, we've seen now that has proven to be false."

"Putin's actions have shown us that might have been the world we've been living in, but that's not the world he or China have been living in," she said.

The United States and its partners have blocked Russia from much of the international financial system by banning transactions with the Russian central bank. They have also cut Russia off from the global bank messaging system called SWIFT, frozen the assets of Russian leaders and oligarchs, and banned the export from the United States and other nations of advanced technology to Russia. Russia has answered with its own export bans on food, cars and timber.

The penalties can lead to odd decouplings: British and European sanctions on Roman Abramovich, the Russian oligarch who owns the [Chelsea soccer team](#) in Britain, prevent the club from selling tickets or merchandise.

About [400 companies](#) have chosen to suspend or withdraw operations from Russia, including iconic brands of global consumerism such as Apple, Ikea and Rolex.

While many countries remain dependent on Russian energy exports, governments are strategizing how to wean themselves. Washington and London have announced plans to [end imports of Russian oil](#).

The outstanding question is whether any of the U.S.-led penalties would one day be extended to China, which is a far bigger and more integral part of the global economy than Russia.

Even outside the Ukraine war, Mr. Biden has continued many Trump administration policies aimed at delinking parts of the American economy from that of China and punishing Beijing for its commercial practices.

Officials have kept the tariffs imposed by Mr. Trump, which covered about two-thirds of Chinese imports. The Treasury Department has continued to impose investment bans on Chinese companies [with ties to the country's military](#). And in June, [a law will go into effect](#) in the United States barring many goods made in whole or in part in [the region of Xinjiang](#).

Despite all that, demand for Chinese-made goods has surged through the pandemic, as Americans splurge on online purchases. The overall U.S. trade deficit [soared to record levels](#) last year, pushed up by a widening deficit with China, and foreign investments into China [actually accelerated](#) last year.

Some economists have called for more global integration, not less. Speaking at a virtual conference on Monday, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, director general of the World Trade Organization, urged a move toward "re-globalization," saying, "Deeper, more diversified international markets remain our best bet for supply resilience."

But those economic ties will be further strained if U.S.-China relations worsen, and especially if China gives substantial aid to Russia.

Besides recent [warnings to China](#) from Mr. Biden and Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo has said her agency would [ban the sale of critical American technology](#) to Chinese companies if China tried to supply forbidden technology to Russia.

	<p>In the meantime, the uncertainty has left the U.S.-China relationship in flux. While many major Chinese banks and private companies have suspended their interactions with Russia to comply with sanctions, foreign asset managers appear to have also begun moving their money out of China in recent weeks, possibly in anticipation of sanctions.</p> <p>Mary Lovely, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, said she did not expect China to “throw all in” with Russia, but that the war could still strain economic ties by worsening U.S.-China relations.</p> <p>“Right now, there is great uncertainty as to how the U.S. and China will respond to the challenges posed by Russia’s increasingly urgent need for assistance,” she said. “That policy uncertainty is another push to multinationals who were already rethinking supply chains.”</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/22 Ukraine air force outgunned but fights back
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/22/world/europe/ukraine-air-force-russia.html
GIST	<p>LVIV, Ukraine — Each night, Ukrainian pilots like Andriy Ioter in an undisclosed aircraft hangar, waiting, waiting, until the tension is broken with a shouted, one-word command: “Air!”</p> <p>Andriy hustles into his Su-27 supersonic jet and hastily taxis toward the runway, getting airborne as quickly as possible. He takes off so fast that he doesn’t yet know his mission for the night, though the big picture is always the same — to bring the fight to a Russian Air Force that is vastly superior in numbers but has so far failed to win control of the skies above Ukraine.</p> <p>“I don’t do any checks,” said Andriy, a Ukrainian Air Force pilot who as a condition of granting an interview was not permitted to give his surname or rank. “I just take off.”</p> <p>Nearly a month into the fighting, one of the biggest surprises of the war in Ukraine is Russia’s failure to defeat the Ukrainian Air Force. Military analysts had expected Russian forces to quickly destroy or paralyze Ukraine’s air defenses and military aircraft, yet neither has happened. Instead, Top Gun-style aerial dogfights, rare in modern warfare, are now raging above the country.</p> <p>“Every time when I fly, it’s for a real fight,” said Andriy, who is 25 and has flown 10 missions in the war. “In every fight with Russian jets, there is no equality. They always have five times more” planes in the air.</p> <p>The success of Ukrainian pilots has helped protect Ukrainian soldiers on the ground and prevented wider bombing in cities, since pilots have intercepted some Russian cruise missiles. Ukrainian officials also say the country’s military has shot down 97 fixed-wing Russian aircraft. That number could not be verified but the crumpled remnants of Russian fighter jets have crashed into rivers, fields and houses.</p> <p>The Ukrainian Air Force is operating in near total secrecy. Its fighter jets can fly from air strips in western Ukraine, airports that have been bombed yet retain enough runway for takeoffs or landings — or even from highways, analysts say. They are vastly outnumbered: Russia is believed to fly some 200 sorties per day while Ukraine flies five to 10.</p> <p>Ukrainian pilots do have one advantage. In most of the country, Russian planes fly over territory controlled by the Ukrainian military, which can move anti-aircraft missiles to harass — and shoot down — planes.</p> <p>“Ukraine has been effective in the sky because we operate on our own land,” Yuriy Ihnat, a spokesman for the Ukrainian Air Force said. “The enemy flying into our airspace is flying into the zone of our air defense systems.” He described the strategy as luring Russian planes into air defense traps.</p>

Dave Deptula, dean of the Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies and the principal attack planner for the Desert Storm air campaign in Iraq, said the impressive performance of the Ukrainian pilots had helped counter their disadvantages in numbers. He said Ukraine now has roughly 55 operational fighter jets, a number that is dwindling from shoot-downs and mechanical failures, as Ukrainian pilots are “stressing them to max performance.”

Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelensky, has appealed repeatedly to Western governments to replenish the Ukrainian Air Force and has asked NATO to enforce a no-fly zone over the country, a step Western leaders have so far refused to take. Slovakia and Poland have considered sending MiG-29 fighter jets, which Ukrainian pilots could fly with minimal additional training, but as yet no transfers have been made.

“Russian troops have already fired nearly 1,000 missiles at Ukraine, countless bombs,” Mr. Zelensky said in a video address to Congress on March 16, appealing for more planes. “And you know that they exist, and you have them, but they are on earth, not in Ukraine — in the Ukrainian sky.”

Mr. Deptula said transferring these jets into Ukraine is critical. “Without resupply,” he said, “they will run out of airplanes before they run out of pilots.”

Pilotless drones are also a tool in the Ukrainian military’s arsenal, but not in the battle for control of the airspace. Ukraine flies a Turkish-made armed drone, the Bayraktar TB-2, a plodding, propeller aircraft that is lethally effective in destroying tanks or artillery pieces on the ground but cannot hit targets in the air. If Ukraine’s air defenses fail, Russian jets could easily pick them off.

As in other aspects of Ukraine’s war effort, volunteers play a role in the air battles. A volunteer network watches and listens for Russian jets, calling in coordinates and estimated speed and altitude. Other private Ukrainian pilots have removed up-to-date civilian navigation equipment from their planes and handed it over to the air force, in case it can be helpful.

Air-to-air combat has been rare in modern war, with only isolated examples in recent decades. U.S. pilots, for example, have not flown extensive aerial dogfights since the first Iraq War in 1991. Since then, U.S. fighter jets have engaged in air-to-air combat on just a few occasions, shooting down 10 planes in the Balkan wars and one plane in Syria, according to Mr. Deptula.

In the night sky, Andriy said he relies on instruments to discern the positions of enemy planes, which he says are always present. He has shot down Russian jets but was not permitted to say how many, or of which type. He said his targeting system can fire at planes a few dozen miles away.

“I mostly have tasks of hitting airborne targets, of intercepting enemy jets,” he said. “I wait for the missile to lock on my target. After that I press fire.”

When he shoots down a Russian jet, he said, “I am happy that this plane will no longer bomb my peaceful towns. And as we see in practice, that is exactly what Russian jets do.”

Most of the aerial combat in Ukraine has been nocturnal, as Russian aircraft attack in the dark when they are less vulnerable to air defenses. In the dogfights over Ukraine, Andriy said, the Russians have been flying an array of modern Sukhoi jets, such as the Su-30, Su-34 and Su-35.

“I had situations when I was approaching a Russian plane to a close enough distance to target and fire,” he said. “I could already detect it but was waiting for my missile to lock on while at the same time from the ground they tell me that a missile was fired at me already.”

He said he maneuvered his jet through a series of extreme banks, dives and climbs in order to exhaust the fuel supplies of the missiles coming after him. “The time I have to save myself depends on how far away the missile was fired at me and what kind of missile,” he said.

	<p>Still, he said in an interview on a clear, sunny day, “I can still feel a huge rush of adrenaline in my body because every flight is a fight.”</p> <p>Andriy graduated from the Kharkiv Air Force School after deciding to become a pilot as a teenager. “Neither me nor my friends ever thought we would have to face a real war,” he said. “But that’s not how it turned out.”</p> <p>Andriy has moved his wife to a safer part of Ukraine, but she has not left the country, he said. She spends her days weaving homemade camouflage nets for the Ukrainian army. He never tells family members when he is going on duty, he said, calling only after returning from a night flight.</p> <p>“I only have to use my skills to win,” said Andriy. “My skills are better than the Russians. But on the other hand, many of my friends, and even those more experienced than me, are already dead.”</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/22 China in back seat international diplomacy
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/22/world/asia/china-ukraine-russia-diplomacy.html
GIST	<p>China has repeatedly called for peace talks in Ukraine. What it has not done is press Russia to negotiate an end to a war that has already cost thousands of lives, displaced millions and threatened to disrupt the world’s economy and even food security.</p> <p>Despite calls from other world leaders to play a more proactive role, China has instead tried to keep its distance. It has urged peace but not stepped up to mediate or organize talks, leaving such efforts to far smaller powers, including France, Turkey and Israel.</p> <p>Intervening more forcefully, in the view of officials in Beijing, is fraught with political and economic risks that the country’s leader, Xi Jinping, appears reluctant to take. Instead it has sought to walk a careful line between the international outrage over Russia’s invasion and support for one of its most powerful partners.</p> <p>The result has been to leave China, diplomatically, on the sidelines of the conflict, unable or unwilling to wield influence commensurate with its growing economic and military might.</p> <p>“If Xi truly wants the crisis to end,” John Delury, a professor of Chinese studies at Yonsei University in Seoul, said, “then the flat-footed response testifies to China’s impotence in world politics, despite decades of rising to great power status.”</p> <p>Officials in Beijing say they do want to see the carnage stop. In a video conference call with President Biden last Friday, Mr. Xi endorsed a two-part approach — a cease-fire, followed by humanitarian aid, according to Chinese officials.</p> <p>It is not clear, however, whether Mr. Xi has communicated that to the Russian president, Vladimir V. Putin. They spoke the day after the war began on Feb. 24 but not since. Mr. Xi has yet to speak with Ukraine’s leader, Volodymyr Zelensky.</p> <p>As the fighting has dragged on, and with it the toll in human suffering, China’s diplomats have been forced into increasingly contorted defenses of Beijing’s stance.</p> <p>They have touted humanitarian aid to Ukraine but refused to criticize Mr. Putin’s government for causing the humanitarian crisis. China’s ambassador to Ukraine, Fan Xianrong, told officials in Lviv that China was “a force of good” for the country and praised the Ukrainian unity in the face of a war that officials in Beijing will not describe as an invasion.</p> <p>China’s avoidance of any criticism of Russia undermines its claim to be a neutral party.</p>

“Don’t be naïve,” China’s ambassador to the United States, Qin Gang, [said](#) on CBS’s “Face the Nation” on Sunday when pressed to explain why China refused to criticize Russia’s invasion. “Condemnation doesn’t solve the problem.”

China’s stance has already hardened views toward it in Europe, which has shown remarkable unity against the Russian invasion ahead of a planned summit between the European Union and China on April 1. It has also prompted warnings from the United States that explicit economic or military assistance to Russia would prompt harsh punishment against China.

China’s policy is bound by the [deep, even personal relationship](#) Mr. Xi has forged with the Russian leader. The war has strained but so far not broken those bonds.

Chinese officials also share Mr. Putin’s view of the United States, accusing it of fanning the flames that ignited the war by expanding NATO. They have also criticized the American use of economic and trade sanctions to punish Russia.

In the zero-sum calculation that drives policymaking, pressing Russia to make concessions would effectively bolster the position of the United States and its allies. At the same time, China cannot afford to sever its ties with them, either.

“China does not have any other partner of the same strategic weight as Russia, who shares his distrust of the current international order,” said Bilahari Kausikan, Singapore’s former ambassador to Russia and the United Nations. “And that’s the bottom line. They won’t do anything that would fundamentally jeopardize the relationship with Russia or undermine Putin’s grip on power.”

In Washington, officials view Mr. Xi’s position as duplicitous, comparing it to China’s handling of the diplomacy around North Korea’s nuclear program. In that case, it has called for the country to abandon its nuclear ambitions, while still providing it with energy and other products to blunt the impact of United Nations sanctions.

In some respects, the talks over North Korea’s nuclear program were a high-water mark for China’s international diplomacy. It played host to several rounds of negotiations that reached a landmark agreement in 2005 for North Korea to forsake its weapons in exchange for economic aid and security assurances. A year later the deal fell apart and the country’s leader at the time, Kim Jong-il, conducted a nuclear test.

Since then, China’s role in international diplomacy has remained limited.

On the United Nations Security Council, where China is one of the five permanent, veto-wielding powers, it has often played more of a supporting role than a leading one. In many cases that means joining Russia. When the war began, however, China was one of three of the 15 members that abstained from a resolution that condemned the invasion. (Russia vetoed it.) That raised some expectations that a crack might open between the two countries, but since then China has continued to provide diplomatic cover for Russia.

Last week, Xue Hanqin, China’s judge on the International Court of Justice, the United Nations’ top judicial body, joined a Russian judge in dissenting from a ruling last week calling for Russia to halt its military campaign in Ukraine.

In [her dissent](#), Judge Xue wrote that a provisional ruling on Ukraine’s claim of a genocide unfolding would “not contribute to the resolution of the crisis in Ukraine.”

In other international forums, too, China has gone so far as to discourage multilateral peace efforts, dismissing an appeal by Ukraine to bring up the war for debate in the ministerial meetings of the Group of 20 major economies, being held this year in Indonesia.

“The G20 is the premier forum for international economic cooperation, not an appropriate platform to discuss political security issues such as Ukraine,” a spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Zhao Lijian, said. The organization, he added, “should stick to its mandate.”

China may find its position increasingly untenable as the human and economic toll rises in Ukraine, and beyond. The European Union’s chief diplomat has called on China to do more. So did the foreign minister of Singapore, which has maintained friendly relations with Beijing.

“I think the first thing is that China has enormous influence on Russia, both politically, economically and diplomatically,” the minister, Vivian Balakrishnan, said in [a forum](#) organized by Bloomberg News. Even in China, there are voices urging the Chinese government to do more, arguing that bolder efforts should be expected of a country that aspires to global leadership.

“We need to really get everybody together,” said Wang Huiyao, the president of the Center for China and Globalization in Beijing who has [called](#) for China to mediate and give Mr. Putin an off-ramp. “That’s where something is missing right now.”

Others, though, see the war as an opportunity for China, if handled carefully.

At a recent meeting of Chinese foreign policy and security scholars in Beijing to discuss the crisis in Ukraine, at least some concluded that there was “no urgency in bringing about an end to the war,” according to a summary of their discussion that was posted on a Chinese website. China also lacked experience in leading global negotiations, some of the scholars argued at the meeting organized by [MacroChina](#), an economic research group based in Beijing. (The summary was later removed.)

“The war is sapping the national strength of the old powers of the United States, Europe and Russia,” the summary described the scholars as saying. “China needs to watch the fire from the opposite bank and stay out of the war.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/22 Russia pulls aircraft out from south Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/03/22/world/ukraine-russia-war#satellite-imagery-shows-that-russia-removed-military-aircraft-from-a-key-airport-in-ukraine
GIST	<p>Russia has withdrawn most of its helicopters from a strategic airport in Kherson, in southern Ukraine, according to satellite images analyzed by The Times, in what experts said could be a telltale sign of Russian military setbacks in the south of the country.</p> <p>The removal of the equipment from the airport, evidenced by images captured by the space imaging company Planet Labs over six days, comes as the Ukrainian Army is pressing to retake lost territory in the Kherson region.</p> <p>Kherson, a shipbuilding center east of Odessa on the Black Sea, was the first major city to be overwhelmed by Russian forces in the early days of the war. But Russia has failed to overtake the region as a whole.</p> <p>Control over Kherson is essential to any effort to dominate the south broadly. The region, which lies just north of the Russian-controlled Crimean peninsula, stretches from the Black Sea coastline to the mouth of the Dnieper River.</p> <p>Last week, Ukrainian forces attacked the Kherson airport, inflicting considerable damage to Russian equipment, which was clearly visible in satellite images and video of the aftermath. An image taken on Monday shows that previously visible aircraft had been removed, though Russian ground troops appear to still control the airport.</p>

	<p>“The Ukrainian attack itself shows the vulnerability of the position, and the Russians may have decided that it’s unwise to keep expensive aircraft parked there,” Frederick W. Kagan, the director of the Critical Threats project at the American Enterprise Institute, wrote in an email. He said Russian forces appeared to have given up, at least for the moment, on taking Mykolaiv, a strategic city located on an inlet of the Black Sea, as well as other critical areas in southern Ukraine, like Odessa, a major economic and cultural center.</p> <p>“Kherson airfield is most useful for those operations,” he added.</p> <p>A video posted to Twitter on March 18, and verified by The Times, shows Russian vehicles towing helicopters away from the airport through a town about 25 miles to the southeast.</p> <p>Mason Clark, a senior analyst and Russia team leader at the Institute for the Study of War, wrote in an email that the Russians on the whole were pulling back manned aircraft as a result of losses sustained against Ukrainian forces. Mr. Clark said the Russian air operations may also have been impacted by casualties of crew and mechanical support staff and exhaustion.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/22 TotalEnergies will stop buying Russia oil
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/03/22/world/ukraine-russia-war#total-energies-russia-oil
GIST	<p>TotalEnergies, the French oil and gas company, said on Tuesday that it would stop buying Russian oil by the end of the year and halt further investment in projects in the country.</p> <p>At the same time, the company warned of the risks and potential negative consequences — for itself and Europe — of a headlong flight from Russia in the wake of Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>The Paris-based company said it had “initiated the gradual suspension of its activities in Russia, while assuring its teams’ safety.” TotalEnergies had said on March 1 that it would halt new Russian investment.</p> <p>Tuesday’s announcement expanded on that initial statement, describing how the company would no longer enter into or renew contracts to purchase Russian oil and petroleum products, and saying that would it would halt all such purchases by the end of this year. TotalEnergies also said it would stop providing capital for new projects in Russia, including a large planned liquefied natural gas installation called Arctic LNG 2.</p> <p>The energy company’s actions since the invasion illustrate the challenges for European businesses and policymakers. Europe is dependent on energy from Russia, which is one of the world’s largest suppliers of oil and gas.</p> <p>TotalEnergies itself is in a difficult position. The company said in its statement on Tuesday that it had been accused of “complicity in war crimes” for continuing to work in Russia. At the same time, its Russian business, especially liquefied natural gas investments, has been an important part of the company’s future strategy and something it has been reluctant to completely renounce.</p> <p>TotalEnergies “is far more entrenched” in Russia than rivals like BP and Shell, which have made commitments to completely extricate themselves, said Biraj Borkhataria, an analyst at RBC Capital Markets, an investment bank.</p> <p>Buying energy from Russia is also an established practice that will be difficult to abandon. TotalEnergies appears to have been one of the larger buyers of shiploads of Russian crude in 2021, averaging 186,000 barrels a day, according to data from Kpler, a research firm.</p> <p>TotalEnergies has contracts to import Russian oil that comes by pipeline to its Leuna refinery in eastern Germany. The company said that it would terminate these deals by the end of 2022 and substitute supplies brought through Poland.</p>

	<p>But the company warned that such moves could have an impact on the availability of an ingredient for diesel fuel that is already in short supply globally.</p> <p>The company said it was continuing to supply liquefied natural gas to Europe through a facility that it owns in part called Yamal LNG, as long as governments “consider that Russian gas is necessary.”</p> <p>The company noted a dilemma that complicated efforts to liquidate its holdings. Russian law, it said, barred it from selling its various minority interests to non-Russian buyers.</p> <p>“Abandoning these interests without consideration would enrich Russian investors, in contradiction with the sanctions’ purpose,” TotalEnergies said.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/22 Fla. Disney workers walk out in furor
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/22/business/media/disney-florida-employee-protests.html
GIST	<p>Several weeks ago, before the Walt Disney Company became entangled in a battle over anti-L.G.B.T.Q. legislation in Florida — one that continued on Tuesday with walkouts by Disney employees — longtime theme park executives worried there could be trouble ahead.</p> <p>More than 150 companies, including Marriott and American Airlines, had signed a Human Rights Campaign letter opposing the legislation, which restricts classroom instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity and has been labeled by opponents as the “Don’t Say Gay” bill. Disney, with roughly 80,000 theme park workers in Florida and a long history of supporting the L.G.B.T.Q. community, was not among them. Leaders at the Disney Parks, Experiences and Products division urged action: Disney’s name should be on the list.</p> <p>They were rebuffed, according to three people briefed on the matter, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to comply with company strictures about speaking to reporters. Disney’s newly hired corporate affairs chief, Geoff Morrell, and Disney legislative affairs executives — guided by the general desire of Bob Chapek, the chief executive, to avoid publicly weighing in on state political battles — decided that continuing to work behind the scenes had a better chance of a payoff. For weeks, Disney lobbyists in Florida had been pressing to soften the legislation.</p> <p>At least in this instance, staying quiet backfired, resulting in a cascade of events that has amounted to one of the biggest squalls for Disney in decades. It has also become a high-profile example of a stark shift in corporate culture: A socially conscious generation of workers are demanding that their employers speak out on contentious social and political issues.</p> <p>Faced with an employee uprising about the company’s decision to stay quiet, Mr. Chapek shifted course and publicly disavowed the Florida legislation on March 9, the day of Disney’s annual shareholder meeting. On March 10, Gov. Ron DeSantis punched back, mocking the company as “Woke Disney.” On March 11, with some employees still angry and questions mounting about his leadership, Mr. Chapek bluntly apologized to Disney’s 200,000 workers in an email.</p> <p>Last week, still-unsatisfied Disney employees began organizing protests with a website, WhereIsChapek.com. On Friday, Walt Disney Studios let it be known that a same-sex kiss that had been cut from Pixar’s upcoming “Lightyear” had been restored. Over the weekend, announcers at Disney-owned ESPN protested the legislation with on-air silence during the N.C.A.A. women’s basketball tournament.</p> <p>And now Disney — a company that cultivates perfection as part of its brand — finds itself in the third week of a mess.</p> <p>On Tuesday, the WhereIsChapek employee protests culminated with various actions. None were particularly boisterous, although they succeeded in commanding the news media’s attention. On Tuesday</p>

morning, a CNBC crew reported live from the front gates of Disney's corporate headquarters in Burbank, Calif.

Some Disney artists posted support on Twitter, where the hashtag #DisneySayGay was prominent midmorning. Sixty to 70 Disney employees briefly walked in a loop around Walt Disney Studios in Burbank. Down the street at the Bette Davis Picnic Area, a smattering of Disney employees gathered in protest, although they seemed outnumbered, at least at one point, by members of the news media.

In a statement about the walkouts on Tuesday, the company said, "We respect our colleagues' right to express their views, and we pledge our ongoing support of the L.G.B.T.Q.+ community in the fight for equal rights."

It was impossible to gauge the ultimate level of participation; most Disney employees are still working at home. Some participation was virtual, one organizer said, with employees leaving an "away" message on Slack or other internal messaging systems to express solidarity.

The creators of the WhereIsChapek site said they were members of Disney's L.G.B.T.Q. "community and their allies." The site listed demands, including indefinitely ceasing — not pausing and re-evaluating, as Mr. Chapek has promised — political donations to Florida lawmakers who were involved in the passage of the bill. The New York Times verified that the anonymous organizers were Disney employees.

To get ahead of the walkout, Disney held an all-company virtual town hall on Monday that was dedicated to L.G.B.T.Q. issues. (A town hall had long been planned for Tuesday, albeit on a different diversity, equity and inclusion topic.) The roughly 100-minute session featured a panel discussion with eight Disney employees who spoke about their own L.G.B.T.Q. experience and why the company's initial silence on the bill was hurtful. [Nadine Smith](#), executive director of Equality Florida, a civil rights advocacy group, participated in a separate discussion.

Mr. Chapek spoke briefly on camera, according to several people who attended the meeting.

"I understand where we have made mistakes — and the pain those mistakes caused," he said. "I know that our silence wasn't just about the bill in Florida, but about every time an individual or institution that should have stood up for this community didn't. I and the leadership team are determined to use this moment as a catalyst for more meaningful and lasting change."

As part of the town hall, Disney announced that Mr. Chapek had postponed a management retreat planned for next week in Orlando, Fla. He and senior executives would instead use that time to go on a listening tour at Disney workplaces, both domestically and overseas.

Disney also unveiled a task force to develop an action plan for Disney to be a more positive force for the L.G.B.T.Q. community, including through its content for families. In addition, Disney said it had signed on to the [Human Rights Campaign's condemnation](#) of anti-transgender government actions in Texas.

To understand the furor inside Disney about its handling of the legislation in Florida, it helps to know Disney's history.

In the 1990s, [Disney was one of the first major corporations](#) to offer health coverage to the live-in partners of gay and lesbian employees. That decision, paired with tolerance of an unofficial "gay day" celebration at Walt Disney World in Florida, prompted a noisy boycott from Southern Baptists. Disney stood firm. (Church members officially [ended their boycott](#) in 2005.)

In the current situation, Disney not only tried to stay quiet, it had given money to Florida politicians supporting the legislation, raising alarm, particularly among longtime L.G.B.T.Q. employees: Was Disney fading as an ally?

	<p>There has also been simmering resentment inside Disney over L.G.B.T.Q. representation in Disney-branded content. It did not start with Mr. Chapek's tenure. Disney has long tried to keep such characters and relationships to a minimum. It had been decided that Pixar's "Lightyear," for instance, could have a lesbian couple at its center. But a G-rated kiss was perhaps a step too far.</p> <p>These factors and others — the prolonged isolation of Disney employees during the pandemic, perhaps — added to an already combustible situation.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/22 Crash of China Eastern Airlines Flight 5735
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/22/world/asia/china-eastern-crash-explained.html
GIST	<p>China Eastern Airlines Flight 5735 was making a short trip between two cities in southern China on Monday, cruising at an altitude of more than 29,000 feet, when it began a violent plunge toward the earth. Residents in the area described hearing a boom, apparently from the plane crashing into a hillside, and then seeing smoke from the fires it had ignited.</p> <p>More than 24 hours later, emergency crews had found no survivors among the 132 people who were on board, officials said. The chances of finding anyone alive appeared slim. "It was in fragments scattered all around," Li Chenbin, a technician in the area told the China News Service. "I didn't see anyone who lived through it."</p> <p>But workers continued to comb the hilly, rural area, also looking for the Boeing 737-800 jet's flight recorders.</p> <p>Many questions remain about what led up to the crash of Flight MU5735. Here's a look at what we know so far:</p> <p>The plane plummeted more than 20,000 feet in about a minute.</p> <p>Flight MU5735 took off shortly after 1 p.m. on Monday and the first hour of its journey proceeded as normal, Zhu Tao, the director of aviation safety at the Civil Aviation Administration of China, said late Tuesday. The plane was cruising at about 29,000 feet around 2:17 p.m., but a few minutes later air traffic controllers noticed the aircraft had suddenly lost altitude.</p> <p>The plane lost more than 20,000 feet in just over a minute, according to Flightradar24, a tracking platform.</p> <p>Air traffic controllers immediately called the plane crew, Mr. Zhu said, but did not receive a reply after several attempts. By 2:23 p.m., the plane's radar signal disappeared, he said, and it had crashed.</p> <p>Mr. Zhu acknowledged that officials had uncovered little information so far.</p> <p>"The aircraft was severely damaged in this accident, and the investigation is very difficult," he said. "With the information currently available, it is still impossible to make a clear judgment on the cause of the accident."</p> <p>The plane's sudden dive occurred near a point in the route where it would normally begin its initial descent, according to Flightradar24's records. The 675-mile flight from Kunming, the capital of Yunnan Province in southwest China, to Guangzhou, a major city in the southeastern province of Guangdong, usually takes about two hours. It crashed in Teng County in the region of Guangxi.</p> <p>It is relatively rare for a plane to crash while cruising or during its initial descent. While cruising takes up more than half of the time commercial planes spend in the air, only 13 percent of fatal accidents happen during this stage, according to a Boeing report on data from 2011 through 2020. Just 3 percent of fatal crashes occur during the initial descent.</p> <p>The plane was a workhorse model with a history of reliable service.</p>

The plane was a Boeing 737-800 that had flown for nearly seven years. It was not a 737 Max, the model that was grounded worldwide after two fatal crashes in 2018 and 2019 that were caused by a faulty flight stabilizing system.

The 737-800 is part of Boeing's Next Generation series. It is a narrow-body model, with [nearly 5,000 built](#) since it first went into production in the late 1990s. The widely used model has a good safety record, with 22 hull-losses, meaning the plane was damaged beyond economical repair, recorded over the past two decades, according to the [Aviation Safety Network database](#).

China Eastern has vastly improved its safety record.

China Eastern Airlines, the country's second-largest carrier, had a checkered record in its early years, with multiple deadly crashes in the late 1980s and 1990s. In 1989, a China Eastern flight lost power after takeoff in Shanghai, killing 34. And in 1993, an error by a crew member forced an emergency landing in Alaska that killed two passengers.

In 2004, a buildup of ice on the wings of a China Eastern plane flying from Baotou in Inner Mongolia caused it to crash, killing 55. Since then, the airline's safety record drastically improved, with no fatal crashes before Monday, according to flight safety databases.

The airline's safety history mirrors that of China as a whole. In the 1990s the country was considered one of the most dangerous places in the world to fly. But after [officials carried out a regulatory overhaul](#), the country has maintained an admirable safety record. The country's last major crash before Monday was in 2010.

On Tuesday, a China Eastern official, Sun Shiying, said the aircraft and crew for Flight 5735 had met requirements before takeoff. He did not directly respond to questions about the plane's maintenance history and the number of flight hours the pilot had accumulated.

The investigation is just beginning, but the cause could be complex.

The Civil Aviation Administration of China said on Monday that it activated an emergency mechanism as soon as it received reports of the crash and sent a team to the site to begin an investigation. The agency also said it would require "more industrywide efforts to improve aviation safety."

Boeing, the plane's manufacturer, said Monday that it was in contact with the U.S. National Transportation Safety Board about the crash, and the manufacturer's technical experts were prepared to assist the Civil Aviation Administration of China in its investigation.

The initial investigation will focus on information from the flight data recorders, or black boxes, which have yet to be recovered. Experts will also study video records that have emerged, including security footage from a mining company that appeared to show a plane heading directly toward the earth.

Because airplanes are so technologically complex, the cause of a crash is always difficult to identify and always multilayered, experts said. Official reports on a crash's cause can take months, or longer, to complete.

"It's never one thing," said Thomas R. Anthony, the director of the aviation safety and security program at the University of Southern California. "There may be one thing that's obvious, there may be one primary thing, but it's never one thing."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/22 Ukraine push back; Russia pummels cities
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/22/world/europe/ukrainians-fight-russian-invasion.html
GIST	Ukrainian forces pressed to thwart the Russian invasion, mounting counteroffensives on multiple fronts and retaking a town outside of Kyiv on Tuesday, while the more heavily armed Russians, unable so far to gain a decisive upper hand, tried to pound Ukraine's cities and people into submission.

As the fighting seesawed around Kyiv, Ukrainian military officials said their forces had prevailed in Makariv, a key crossroads on the western approaches to the city, while in the south of the country they sought to reclaim the Kherson region. The southern port of Mariupol still endured a brutal siege, however, with the government saying that some 100,000 civilians remained trapped in that ruined city with little food, water, power or heat.

“This war will not end easily or rapidly,” Jake Sullivan, the U.S. national security adviser, told reporters on the eve of President Biden’s departure for a NATO summit in Europe.

Mr. Biden is set to [impose sanctions](#) this week on hundreds of members of the State Duma, Russia’s lower house of Parliament, according to a person familiar with the planned announcement.

In Russia, President Vladimir V. Putin’s government, which had apparently expected a lightning conquest, responded to its setbacks in Ukraine and its plummeting reputation in the West by expanding its recent draconian crackdown on dissent, making it a criminal offense to discredit the activities of all state agencies working abroad, like embassies. A Russian court sentenced the already imprisoned opposition leader Aleksei A. Navalny, who opposes Russia’s war on Ukraine, to nine more years in prison on fraud charges.

A Pentagon assessment concluded that Russia’s “combat power” in Ukraine had for the first time dipped below 90 percent of its original force — the more than 150,000 troops massed in western Russia and Belarus before the Feb. 24 invasion. That reflected steady [losses](#) suffered by the Russian military, to an extent that U.S. officials say can leave units unable to carry out combat duties.

Russian forces were “struggling on many fronts,” including routine supply lines and logistics, according to a senior Defense Department official, who was not authorized to discuss details of Russia’s actions in Ukraine on the record. The Pentagon had even seen indications that some Russian troops had been evacuated because of frostbite, the official said.

The official declined to address Russian casualty numbers, though the Pentagon estimated last week that at least 7,000 Russians had been killed.

New satellite imagery analyzed by The New York Times showed that Russia had removed all of its aircraft from the airport of the southern city of Kherson, the largest city that the Russian forces have captured so far. Ukrainian forces have claimed to hit the airport twice, destroying an undetermined number of helicopters. The removal is a telltale sign that the Russians are struggling as they seek to control the region, experts said.

The removal of the equipment, visible by comparing [pictures](#) taken by the space imaging company Planet Labs over six days, comes as the [Ukrainian army is pressing to reclaim lost territory in the Kherson region](#).

Control over Kherson, taken by Russia on March 2, is essential in any effort to control the south of Ukraine. But Russia has failed to dominate the region as a whole.

Dmitri S. Peskov, the spokesman for Mr. Putin, repeatedly refused to rule out the possibility of Russia using nuclear weapons during a television interview on Tuesday. When asked under what conditions Mr. Putin would use such weapons, Mr. Peskov told CNN, “if it is an existential threat for our country, then it can be.” While he did not define “existential threat,” in the past Russian officials have suggested that it meant an attack on Russia itself, but the invasion of Ukraine has thrown previous policy into question.

It is hard to assess the current landscape of the war there, with a senior U.S. defense official only characterizing the fighting as “a very dynamic, active battlefield.”

The Pentagon has seen no indication that Russian forces are moving toward the use of chemical or biological weapons, the official said.

On Monday, Mr. Biden stressed the possibility that Mr. Putin might turn to such weapons, which are banned by international treaty. “His back is against the wall,” Mr. Biden said at a meeting of U.S. business leaders.

Mr. Biden is due to attend a summit of NATO leaders in Brussels on Thursday that among other issues will discuss a potential response to any such weapons. The United States will also announce new sanctions on Russia in conjunction with its NATO allies, said Mr. Sullivan.

“For the past few months, the West has been united,” he said. “The president is traveling to Europe to ensure we stay united, to cement our collective resolve, to send a powerful message that we are prepared and committed to this for as long as it takes.”

In Ukraine, the Defense Ministry announced that its troops had raised the blue and gold Ukrainian flag over Makariv, about 40 miles west of Kyiv, where control has repeatedly changed hands. The town abuts the key highway that leads from the capital to western Ukraine and Lviv, so keeping it out of Russian hands is important in the effort to prevent Kyiv from being encircled.

The Russians had not been able to advance beyond nine miles northwest of Kyiv or 18 miles from the city’s east — essentially where they were last week, the senior Pentagon official said.

The Ukrainian determination to push back extended to the air force and air defense units, which have managed to continue fighting despite being vastly outnumbered and outgunned by the Russians.

President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine said that the besieged city of Mariupol, a port on the Sea of Azov, was being “reduced to ashes.” Some 100,000 civilians, or 22 percent of the original population, remain stuck there, the government said. The Pentagon official said that Russian naval ships had joined land forces in bombarding the city. Russia’s Black Sea fleet is headquartered on the nearby Crimean Peninsula, and a dozen ships are plying the waters off Ukraine, according to the Pentagon.

Mr. Zelensky, continuing to address parliaments around the world via video link, warned Italy’s Parliament that famine would strike parts of the world if farmers in Ukraine, a major wheat producer, were unable to work. “Famine was approaching for several countries” that depended on Ukrainian corn, oil and wheat, he said, including North African states just across the Mediterranean Sea from Italy.

In response, Prime Minister Mario Draghi of Italy said that his country wanted Ukraine to join the European Union, and praised the “heroic” resistance of the Ukrainians against the “ferociousness” of Mr. Putin.

Mr. Draghi said that Italy had frozen more than 800 million euros (almost \$900 million) worth of assets from Russian oligarchs and was working to overcome its dependency on Russian energy supplies as fast as possible.

At the United Nations, António Guterres, the secretary general, said that 10 million Ukrainians had been displaced from their homes, or just under one quarter of the population.

Mr. Guterres called the war in Ukraine unwinnable. Ukrainians were “enduring a living hell — and the reverberations are being felt worldwide with skyrocketing food, energy and fertilizer prices threatening to spiral into a global hunger crisis,” he said. Guterres repeated his plea for Russia to stop the war, calling for serious negotiations.

The Russian Parliament, the Duma, which reliably does the Kremlin’s bidding, amended an already draconian censorship law to make “discrediting” the activities abroad of all government bodies — not just the military — a potentially criminal offense. The law bars terms like “war” or “invasion” to describe Russia’s military operations in Ukraine, punishing anyone spreading “false information” about the invasion with up to 15 years in prison. Russia has taken other moves to quell information, prompting

	<p>independent news outlets to shut down or move operations out of the country for fear of punishment, and it has blocked access to Facebook and Instagram, both heavily used by government officials and businesses.</p> <p>The conviction and sentencing of Mr. Navalny was widely seen as a way to keep him behind bars and further restrict his ability to address the outside world, as the Kremlin tries to tightly control the narrative about the war at home and stamp out glimmers of defiance. Mr. Navalny has urged Russians to protest the invasion, via letters from jail that his lawyers post on social media.</p> <p>Zhanna Agalakova, an accomplished Russian foreign correspondent who resigned earlier this month from Channel One, among the most popular networks in a country where the state controls virtually all broadcasts, announced that she had quit to protest Russia's invasion of Ukraine. "I'm doing this for Russians," she said in a series of Twitter posts via Reporters Without Borders. "Our news doesn't show the reality."</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/22 South Africa lifts restrictions, keeps masks
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/03/22/world/covid-19-mandates-cases-vaccine?name=style-coronavirus&region=hub&block=storyline_live_updates_block_recirc&action=click&pgtype=LegacyCollection#south-africa-begins-to-lift-covid-restrictions-but-leaves-indoor-mask-mandate
GIST	<p>South Africa will begin lifting Covid-19 restrictions on Wednesday, President Cyril Ramaphosa said on Tuesday in an address that marked the start of what he called a "new era" in the country's fight against the pandemic.</p> <p>Masks will no longer be required outdoors in South Africa but will continue to be required in public indoor spaces, including shops, offices and public transportation.</p> <p>Indoor and outdoor venues that require proof of vaccination or a negative test no more than 72 hours old will be allowed to fill up to 50 percent of their capacity. Venues without such requirements must continue to adhere to the existing limits of 1,000 people indoors and 2,000 people outdoors.</p> <p>The maximum capacity at funerals will double, from 100 attendees to 200. Post-funeral gatherings remain prohibited.</p> <p>Omicron was first identified in Botswana and South Africa in late November. It quickly became dominant in South Africa, sending case counts skyrocketing to a pandemic peak averaging more than 23,000 cases a day by mid-December. The country declared it was past that peak by early January, and other nations have since followed a similar pattern of rapidly rising and falling waves.</p> <p>South Africa's national state of disaster will not be lifted until April 16, when the period for the public to comment on new health regulations will close, Mr. Ramaphosa said.</p> <p>Though the pandemic is not yet over, Mr. Ramaphosa said, South Africans could return "as far as possible" to the lives they lived before the pandemic and enjoy themselves at stadiums, concerts and theaters. Just 30 percent of the country's population is fully vaccinated, according to Our World in Data, and any further easing of pandemic regulations would require more South Africans to be vaccinated, Mr. Ramaphosa said.</p> <p>Mr. Ramaphosa noted in his address that the South African government had taken into consideration the experiences of countries where "complete" lifting of restrictions led to a rise in infections and deaths. Still, his announcement came on the same day that a senior World Health Organization official said cases were rising in Europe because countries had eased restrictions too soon.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/22 Seattle PD envisions new work changes
----------	--

SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/three-day-weekends-officers-new-changes-works-seattle-police/F2H22YD32VGVP2ORXTIAW7V4/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE, Wash. — The Seattle Police Department is working to tackle a dramatic increase in crime while dealing with a shortage of hundreds of officers.</p> <p>Police Chief Adrian Diaz laid out a new 2022 SPD Strategic Plan on Monday to the Seattle City Council Public Safety and Human Services committee.</p> <p>Part of the plan to recruit more staff includes offering incentives that aren't provided by other police departments. It includes changes like bringing on emotional support dogs after a critical incident, having mental health providers on contract, and even offering wellness and nutrition assistance.</p> <p>A big perk that the police department is currently working on with the Seattle Police Officers Guild (SPOG) is three-day weekends for officers, with no mandatory overtime.</p> <p>"I don't think anyone has seen anything like we've seen over the last couple of years," Diaz said. "We know morale can be low when they're not appreciated, so we're spending a lot of time on finding a schedule and shift that gets people the wellness they need," Diaz said.</p> <p>The new shift would have officers work four 10-hour days. Diaz says currently, officers are working two or three extra shifts every week.</p> <p>"The whole goal is for wellness and people get time off," he said. "More recovery time makes it much more competitive, not only for our officers but with other jurisdictions," Diaz said.</p> <p>After a question about recruiting bonuses from Councilmember Sara Nelson, the police chief acknowledged that recruiting officers has been more difficult after the city eliminated hiring bonuses in February. The change happened after communications and legal confusion between former Mayor Jenny Durkan, Seattle City Council and Mayor Bruce Harrell's office. It led to the department promoting a \$10,000 new-hire and \$25,000 lateral-hire bonus incentive in January. Then the incentive was canceled in February.</p> <p>"Was there an uptick in interest when it was announced?" Nelson asked.</p> <p>"In January we actually had our highest signup since 2020. And in March we dropped dramatically to just six people signing up," Diaz said. He said 17 lateral candidates signed up in January (Diaz did not mention how many of those candidates were hired, though KIRO7 previously reported five officers received the bonus). Of six candidates in March, Diaz said only one lateral candidate finished the testing process.</p> <p>"If we're trying to hire people and have good-quality candidates, having one lateral is not a good place to be in," Diaz said.</p> <p>Mayor Harrell's office said Monday afternoon the city was currently assessing how effective the bonuses were, and that the report from Seattle Department of Human Resources would be done next week.</p> <p>Harrell's office said having enough police officers is a "top priority" and that bringing back bonuses was not off the table.</p> <p>"The Mayor's Office is currently working to develop an effective, sustainable, and comprehensive recruiting plan for new officers and lateral hires. We will continue to review and evaluate the data, as well as work with SPD and with the City Council to explore all potential strategies and options, including bonuses as one potential tool in that effort," spokesperson Jamie Housen said in an email.</p> <p>The 2022 SPD Strategic Plan also says the department will continue to work on reducing use of force. The report noted that use of force is currently down 28% compared to 2019 levels.</p>

The presentation to City Council Monday said as early as next week, the police department will bring on a tool called the BolaWrap that [KIRO7 first showed you in 2020](#).

It can stop a person fleeing without using a lethal weapon. Diaz said training plans are in place, but it is waiting for the company's new, quieter model.

Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda also pointed to the importance of lowering call volumes for SPD officers, which is part of the plan.

"How we offload some of these jobs that are not necessary for officers to respond to will be a very important element of retention strategies," Mosqueda said.

Diaz also said says the department is working toward a new model called "relational policing," or relationship-based policing. All officers will get new training, from patrol to command staff.

"Kind of making every officer a generalist. Being able to build relationships in the community. Problem solving, and also having the skill set to handle an active-shooter situation," Diaz said.

Despite ongoing staffing woes, the chief pointed to big changes at neighborhoods of Little Saigon at 12th and Jackson, and Third and Pine. Both neighborhoods had crowds that people described as open air-drug markets attracting violent crime, but the troubled areas have been cleared and maintained for nearly a month.

"We are seeing positive results when we all work together," Diaz said. "I'm proud of what we've been able to accomplish," he said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/22 Seattle clears trash off Ballard sidewalks
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/project-seattle/seattle-crews-clear-trash-from-ballard-sidewalk-but-residents-urge-city-for-solutions
GIST	<p>Seattle City Crews cleared out trash and debris Tuesday from sidewalks along 8th avenue in Ballard, near 47th street.</p> <p>The work was done next to the several parked RVs that we have shown you in KOMO's 'Project Seattle' reports.</p> <p>However, residents in the area continue to ask if there is a permanent plan to address the RVs that have stayed there, illegally parked, sometimes for weeks and months.</p> <p>"I heard that there was some solution being presented that they've found a destination, or a place in helping the people," said Eric Linden, who owns a building nearby. "Well, it doesn't appear that way to me."</p> <p>Linden wants to hear about a plan that would help residents and those living in the RVs</p> <p>"And all of this is costly," Linden said. "It's not only costing the city, but it's costing the community." When referring to those living in the RVs along the street, he added, "it's also the people who are having these issues as well too and they need a safe environment."</p> <p>James who told us he lives in a van nearby, had his own question for city leaders: "I want an answer from the city of Seattle, 'why we have to keep impounding somebody's vehicle day, after day, after day, instead of solving homelessness?'"</p> <p>We heard back from this District's Councilmember Dan Strauss. He told KOMO: "Working with Mayor Harrell's team I have raised the issues occurring in the area between 3rd Ave and 15th Ave/ 56th St and Leary Way and it is my understanding there will be increased services, outreach, and trash removal</p>

moving forward. I remain focused on the work occurring in Woodland Park where we are moving people out of the park directly into shelter.”

Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell's office sent us this: “the Mayor's Office is continuing to review and evaluate existing processes around RVs.”

A spokesperson for Seattle Public Utilities told KOMO on Tuesday: “Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) and Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) work together on R-V Remediation projects. SPU is the lead agency with for cleaning up debris and waste. SDOT assists with parking enforcement related to abandoned and unoccupied vehicles.

SPU, in partnership with other City departments, implemented a scheduled R-V Remediation clean on 8th Ave NW near 47th street on March 23, [22].

SPU crews schedule and perform several remediations per month based on assessments of areas where there are five or more R-Vs as well as the amount of garbage, debris, etc in that area. We also regularly perform area cleans near parked R-Vs. For this R-V remediation, our crews engaged R-V occupants 72 hours before the clean, letting them know about the remediation and asking them to move their vehicles so SPU can thoroughly clean the area and dispose of the garbage and debris. In response to our engagement, several R-Vs were moved in advance of or during the clean. As of 2 pm, no vehicles had been towed.”

The city agency SDOT, who helps with vehicle enforcement, told KOMO on Tuesday, as they did last month, that they currently are not moving occupied vehicles.

“During R-V remediation efforts, SDOT may assist with parking enforcement related to abandoned and unoccupied vehicles if necessary. However, no vehicles were impounded so far today because several people voluntarily moved their vehicles before or during the clean up. SDOT parking enforcement is continuing to focus on clearing abandoned and unoccupied vehicles, and at this time is not impounding vehicles which are occupied by people refusing to relocate.”

A spokesperson for the City’s HOPE team said: “The HOPE Team works with outreach providers citywide and facilitate shelter referrals, including from the Scofflaw Mitigation Team, for individuals living in vehicles or RVs.

The 2022 budget included \$1.5M for Vehicle Residency Outreach and Safe Lots, however, the King County Regional Homelessness Authority has oversight of the implementation of those funds.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/22 King Co. program for homeless cars, RVs
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/safe-lots-program-set-to-launch-to-help-people-living-in-vehicles
GIST	<p>Safe lots for people living in recreational vehicles are about to make a return even though Seattle tried it before until the program became too costly.</p> <p>The King County Regional Homelessness Authority will oversee this new effort as a way to steer people living in vehicles toward permanent housing. Still, some neighbors have their doubts it will work.</p> <p>One of the challenges of helping people who live in cars and RVs is that they often have different needs from people who sleep in tents. That may make them less likely to give up their vehicle in exchange for a shelter bed.</p> <p>The KCRHA’s new approach will try to take this into account but it could be a tough sell for people who have been parked on the streets for months.</p> <p>“My take on the RV situation is that it's a mess,” said David Thacker, who works in Ballard near a cluster of RVs.</p>

Some streets around Seattle look as though they've been taken over by people living out of their vehicles and the impacts can be immediate for the surrounding neighborhoods.

"I've noticed a distinct increase in the frequency of emergency vehicles, night and day," said Gary Faigin, who lives in Ballard.

The KCRHA has budgeted \$1.9 million to address the problem. The money will be spent on both outreach as well as establishing safe lots. The outreach teams might go around offering access to repairs or help getting vehicle tabs or driver licenses. The safe lots will be a place that people can park overnight and have access to hygiene stations while case workers try to connect them with housing, addiction treatment or other services.

"They tried that," aid David Schneider, who lives near an RV encampment. "It was really expensive and it didn't work."

Seattle tried a safe lot program in 2016 but abandoned the effort when costs soared well past projections. The city was spending about \$35,000 a month to help the owners of about 20 vehicles. A second lot was planned but then cancelled over the costs.

The regional authority is set to try its own version and will start accepting applications from service providers and property owners in the coming weeks.

"Compared to just randomly camping on the street I think that's a better idea," Thacker said.

Many neighbors said the current situation has grown out of control.. and something has to be done.

"That's the disturbing part. It's not safe for them any more than us," Faigin said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/22 Concrete strike impacts unfinished roads
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/concrete-strike-continues-leaving-many-roads-in-seattle-king-county-unfinished
GIST	<p>The longer the strike among concrete workers go on, the longer people in Seattle and King County have to see roads like the West Seattle Bridge and other projects sit unfinished.</p> <p>"All of that is at risk without a reliable source of concrete," said Dow Constantine, King County Executive.</p> <p>He and other county leaders have tried coming up with solutions to end the strike like offering exclusive contracts but when that fell through a week and a half ago, Constantine went back to the drawing board with members of the county council to try and get concrete pouring again.</p> <p>"I know this is not a simple task but it's the only solution for a market that continues to fail us," he said.</p> <p>In response, the King County Council unanimously approved a feasibility study to see if the county and other groups, like Sound Transit and the city of Seattle, can look for their own concrete manufacturing rather than rely on the companies that are at a standstill with the Teamsters Local 174.</p> <p>"We're not saying this is a done deal," said senior deputy mayor for the city of Seattle, Monisha Harrell, "but we would be foolish to not look at all of the options available to us."</p> <p>While every council member approved the study, Rod Dembowski, who represents District 1 of the King County Council, is hesitant to think this will solve the problem.</p>

	<p>"The investment that would be required to build the infrastructure and the knowledge to get into this business seems to be not really realistic," Dembowski said.</p> <p>But a resolution to the strike is still in the air.</p> <p>In a March 18 statement the concrete companies said, "the union can end the strike at any time and allow their members to return to work."</p> <p>Mike Walker with the Teamsters said Tuesday afternoon he hopes the council intervenes in helping end the strike and take steps to make sure this doesn't happen again.</p> <p>"Just as snow and trash removal are essential services, so is the concrete supply," Walker said.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/22 Multiple groups of 100+ migrants at border
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/nation-world/multiple-groups-of-more-than-100-undocumented-migrants-encountered-at-border-del-rio-san-antonio-texas-mexico-nicaragua-columbia-venezuela-cuba-honduras-togo-sierra-leon-senegal-peru-immigration-immigrants
GIST	<p>DEL RIO, Texas (WOAI/KABB) – US Border Patrol agents working in Del Rio encountered four separate large groups of more than 100 undocumented migrants illegally entering the United States over the last few days.</p> <p>The first incident was on March 18 right before 5:00 p.m. Eagle Pass Station agents came across a group of 110 migrants, including 56 people from Colombia, 29 from Venezuela, 13 from Cuba, 11 from Peru and one from Mexico.</p> <p>The second incident was on March 20 also near Eagle Pass. This time it was a group of 115 migrants, including three people from Peru, one from Chile, nine from Nicaragua, 26 from Venezuela, 56 from Cuba, and 20 from Colombia.</p> <p>Then on March 21, agents in the Del Rio area encountered a group of 125 migrants around 6:50 a.m. The group included 24 people from Angola, one from Brazil, 12 from Congo, two from Costa Rica, one from Cote d'Ivoire, eight from Cuba, three from Ghana, 13 from Nicaragua, five from Senegal, five from Sierra Leon, eight from Togo, and 23 from Venezuela.</p> <p>The last one was also on March 21, this time near Eagle Pass. agents found a group of 155 migrants, including one person from Honduras, four from Colombia, five from Nicaragua, and 145 from Cuba.</p> <p>During the current fiscal year, beginning Oct. 1, 2021, through Feb. 28, 2022, Del Rio Sector agents encountered 153,271 migrants.</p> <p>All migrants are processed in accordance with U.S. Customs and Border Protection policies.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/22 WEA: teacher shortage to get worse
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/crisis-in-the-classroom/washington-education-association-expects-statewide-teacher-shortage-to-get-worse
GIST	<p>The search is on for hundreds of qualified teachers as schools across the state need to fill crucial positions and as the Washington Education Association expects the state's teacher shortage to grow worse.</p> <p>Tacoma Public schools said it's lucky it doesn't have a huge gap to fill, but it relies on events like Tuesday's education career fair at the Tacoma Dome to help find the best candidates.</p>

“We know we’re going to have open positions for next year,” said Kathryn McCarthy, spokesperson for Tacoma Public Schools.

“We’re looking for Special Education teachers, like in any district. Also, in math and science,” said Mel Boyd with the Bethel School District.

The teacher shortage felt across the country was apparent at the event. A Northern California district is expanding its teacher search in Washington and even signed on four local teachers.

“Everybody is expanding their recruiting, I think, to make sure they can fill for day one,” said Ken Whittemore with Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District.

TPS said it’s lucky it only has five immediate openings, but anticipates even more come the fall.

“We’ve actually already done 20 interviews of folks today on the spot,” McCarthy said.

The Washington Education Association said events like this one are crucial to fill the gaps across the state. WEA data shows schools districts requested the state superintendent’s office grant so-called emergency certificates for substitutes to fill 11,000 openings statewide over the past two years, with the biggest impacts in small and rural communities.

“Many of them are great folks and they might be highly qualified and highly trained but they might be teaching in an area outside of their expertise,” said Justin Fox-Bailey, WEA Board Member.

He added he expects the statewide teacher shortage to only get worse, impacting class sizes and the quality of kids’ education.

“If we have to make class sizes bigger because we just can’t fill positions, or maybe if somebody is taking over temporarily who maybe doesn’t have the same certification,” Fox-Bailey said.

It’s why Tacoma schools and others today offered on-the-spot interviews and even job offers, with plans to continue recruiting with competitive salaries and signing bonuses. The monetary incentives in Tacoma range from \$250 to \$1,000.

The district said it will be posting more jobs on the district website in mid-May. It’s always looking for substitutes who have a bachelor’s degree.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/22 Drought remains across inland Northwest
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/weather/will-this-summer-be-worse-than-last-year/293-90b7a942-2431-4ced-b3b4-528a1643e05b
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. — Drought conditions remain across most of the Northwest. Rain and snow in recent months aided in improving ongoing drought conditions, but the damage from last summer’s record heat and lack of rain lingers as the dry months of summer loom. On paper, things look worse this spring than they did a year ago, but the numbers alone don’t tell the whole story.</p> <p>The summer outlook doesn’t look good right now comparing drought and snowpack to one year ago. By the middle of March in 2021, 37% of the Northwest was dealing with drought conditions. That’s 1/3 of Washington, Idaho and Oregon. This year, that number has more than doubled. Currently, more than 76% of the region faces drought. In Washington alone, 50% of the state is in a drought, all of that in the eastern half of the state.</p> <p>Comparing snowpack doesn’t get much better. One year ago, most mountains in the Northwest had an above normal snow water equivalent in the snowpack. Parts of the Cascades recorded more than 120% of normal heading into the warm months of spring. This year, many readings are coming up shy of where the</p>

historic normal lies. South-central Washington currently sits at less than 70% of normal for this time of year.

Things aren't looking good heading into the summer months when it comes to ongoing drought and fire conditions. However, there are a few things that might keep this summer from becoming a repeat of what the Inland Northwest saw one year ago.

A closer look at current snowpack shows Spokane and the Lower Pend Oreille basin sit about where they did one year ago in terms of snow water equivalent. The Upper Columbia Basin and much of the west side of the Cascades sit close to normal in terms of current snowpack.

When it comes to the ongoing drought, the Inland Northwest is worse off than one year ago. The lingering effects of record heat and a historically dry summer are still present across the region. The good news is that most of the drought comes from last year. Recent rain and snow helped bring incremental improvement to much of the Northwest.

By this time last year, the historically dry stretch of weather had already taken hold in the Inland Northwest. Things are different this year. Despite January 2022 being drier than January 2021, the rest of this year has been quite different. Compared to last year, Spokane has already seen more precipitation than the city recorded through the end of April in 2021.

In addition to the increase in moisture this year, there's also nothing that suggests a record heat wave will return in 2022. Without the heat dome and the increase in precipitation, there is a chance that the summer to come isn't as dry, hot, or fire prone as what was seen in 2021.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/22 Spokane public schools: police 'last resort'
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/news/investigations/spokane-public-schools-district-violence/293-81ab3887-7a9b-4da6-9ce0-51371f370a37
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. — As KREM 2 investigators continue to look into the district's response to violence at area schools, the Spokane Public Schools (SPS) school board and district amended documents that discourage teachers from reporting violence directly to the police.</p> <p>Originally adopted in 2017, SPS said Policy and Procedure No. 6514, which details district and campus safety, are currently being updated and were just shared with the school board. However, the copy obtained by KREM 2 was updated on March 9, 2022.</p> <p>Although the documents were available on the district's website as of Tuesday afternoon, they have since been removed.</p> <p>Under the section titled "Student Discipline and Reducing Law Enforcement Contact and Arrests," the document states:</p> <p><i>SPS administrators have the primary responsibility to ensure consistent enforcement of school rules and policies. No law enforcement officer or campus safety specialist shall be requested to act as a school disciplinarian. Disciplining students is the responsibility of the school site principal or designee.</i></p> <p><i>Law enforcement officers and campus safety specialists will not be requested to interview students or collect evidence for SPS disciplinary purposes, including for expulsion matters.</i></p> <p><i>Effective the 2020-2021 school year, SPS administrators shall prioritize and document alternatives to police involvement, such as the use of restorative practices, and use law enforcement only as the absolute last resort and only for incidents for which law enforcement is necessary to address a serious threat to school safety, as identified in Procedure No. 3225.</i></p>

	<p>The amended document was presented to the SPS school board and an updated amendment was signed off by SPS Superintendent Adam Swinyards on March 9, 2022. However, the district said the amended procedure has not been approved yet and is still considered a work in progress.</p> <p>Several days after the amendment, KREM 2 investigators spoke with the communication director for SPS, Sandra Jarrard. She said the school district encourages reporting crimes to police.</p> <p>"Whenever there is an assault on a student, our staff immediately is sent to investigate. And right away, we call Spokane Police Department, and once they arrive, they take on that investigation." Jarrard said. "If there is ever an issue with any assault on a student, teachers should feel safe to call 9-1-1."</p> <p>When asked about teachers who were told not to contact the police and go to school administration first, Jarrard said there is no such policy and that police need to be contacted anytime there is an assault on a student or staff member.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/22 What's the deal with masks on planes?
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/22/travel/masks-covid-airplanes-airports.html
GIST	<p>Air travel has been one of the last holdouts for strict pandemic mask requirements. In the United States, for example, the mask mandate — which was recently extended to April 18, when it comes up for review again — is still enforced. Over the past year, 922 of those who didn't wear masks received fines from the Transportation Security Administration, according to a report by the Government Accountability Office.</p> <p>But there are hints that the tide may be turning: Within the past few weeks, Danish airports and London's Heathrow Airport have lifted their mask requirements, as have several major British airlines.</p> <p>Some airline employees in England rejoiced at their reclaimed freedom from enforcing mask rules at 30,000 feet. "First flight done without a mask and it was an absolute dream," a woman, who identified herself as a flight attendant from Yorkshire, England, on her social media accounts, recently wrote on Twitter, alongside a photo of her fully visible smile.</p> <p>In the United States, the International Air Transport Association, which represents nearly 300 airlines, and the U.S. Travel Association, an industry group, have been lobbying the White House not to extend the mandate further, saying it's difficult to rationalize mask rules in the sky, given that authorities have already lifted them in other indoor locations. Republican lawmakers, who recently sued the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to end the mask mandate for air travel, call the rule "arbitrary." But some travel health experts and passengers say airplane cabins and airports should take a more careful approach.</p> <p>"It was very unsettling," said Rebecca Kift, 37, a clinical biochemist from Leeds, England, who had no idea that British airline TUI Airways Ltd. had lifted its mask requirement until she boarded her flight to Manchester from Spain's Gran Canaria island recently. Because her mother is being treated for cancer, she has spent months avoiding crowded indoor situations. But there she was with four hours ahead of her in a cabin full of unmasked flight attendants and mostly unmasked passengers. "I don't think it's fair," she said.</p> <p>Here is a look at the confusing state of mask wear in the sky.</p> <p>What just happened in England?</p> <p>Unlike the United States, England never instituted a governmental mask mandate for air travel.</p> <p>Nonetheless, most British airlines and airports began requiring masks in June 2020, when Britain started mandating masks on other forms of transport.</p> <p>Over the past couple of weeks, as parts of Britain have lifted other types of travel and mask requirements, some airports and airlines have suspended their mask rules, among them, London's Heathrow Airport,</p>

British Airways and Virgin Atlantic. Both airlines said wearing a mask was a “personal choice,” and clarified that the shift only applies while flying to or from destinations where there are no mask requirements, such as England and Barbados.

They are not the first airlines to permit bare faces. Two additional British airlines, Jet2 and TUI Airway, had previously dropped their mask requirements, and passengers began flying without face coverings throughout Scandinavia last October.

What determines if you have to wear a mask on a particular route?

If the departure and destination countries have different restrictions, the country with the stricter rule sets the policy in the sky. Individuals flying between England and Northern Ireland on TUI Airways, for example, would not have to wear a mask, but individuals flying between England and the United States on that same airline would have to wear one.

Beyond England, Northern Ireland, Norway and Barbados, destinations that do not currently have mask requirements in the air include Mexico, St. Lucia, the Bahamas and Jamaica. The United States, Scotland, Italy and China are among the many countries that continue to require masks on planes.

Airport rules may be stricter than plane rules on a given route, meaning a traveler might have to put on a mask upon arrival. Airports in Norway, Denmark and England have been outliers in lifting mask requirements, according to the Airports Council International, a trade organization representing nearly 2,000 airports.

When can I stop flying with a mask in the United States?

Maybe on April 19, if — and that’s a big if — the White House does not extend the federal mask mandate further. Even flight attendants are divided on whether the mandate should be extended again, with some saying that the mask rule is not worth it, given the problems enforcing it, while others argue that the rule is critical to keeping medically vulnerable travelers safe.

Should COVID case counts affect mask mandates?

It depends on whom you ask.

Across the world, case count numbers vary. In recent weeks, case numbers have dipped to their lowest level since June in the United States. Canada is also down to its lowest number of cases since December.

But in many other places, cases are rising. As England moved away from airport and airline mask mandates on March 16, case counts hit their highest point in nearly a month. Meanwhile, a highly transmissible subvariant known as BA.2 is pummeling some parts of Asia and Europe. And on Sunday, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the Biden administration’s top adviser on the pandemic, predicted that the United States would eventually see a similar “uptick” of BA.2 cases.

“COVID is not over,” said Leonard Marcus, director of Harvard’s Aviation Public Health Initiative, which produced a report that some airline executives have used to rationalize ending mask requirements. Marcus said that it’s too soon for him to have an opinion on whether BA.2 merits an extension of the federal mask mandate. But once lifted, he said, a mask mandate will be difficult to reinstate.

Some proponents of ending mask mandates argue that so long as vaccines are preventing serious disease, case counts are irrelevant, because most international travelers are vaccinated.

In a statement announcing the end of its mask requirement last week, Heathrow Airport embodied this line of thinking, mentioning “the strong protection provided by vaccination programs around the world” and an embrace of a “move towards learning to live with COVID longer term.”

But proponents of mask mandates also point out that not everyone on a plane can count on vaccines protecting them and the people they live with from severe COVID infections.

Don't advanced air filtration systems on airplanes provide enough protection?

The advanced filtration systems on many planes refresh the air every two to three minutes. Therefore the risk of being infected should be lower than in other packed indoor settings, many of which no longer require masks, airlines have argued. (It should also be lower than in the airport or on crowded bridges to a plane, where you cannot count on great ventilation systems, according to Dr. David Freedman, president-elect of the American Society of Tropical Medicine & Hygiene.)

Travel testing requirements have also made an already low-risk environment for transmission safer.

But if you're sitting close to a contagious person, you could still end up breathing in recently emitted virus before it makes it into the air filtration system, some researchers have pointed out. "There is some evidence that passengers within two rows of an index case are at higher risk," said Patricia Schlagenhauf, a professor of travel medicine at the University of Zurich.

Is masking on airplanes really effective?

Yes, travel experts say. While the consensus among researchers who focus on this area has been that air travel is quite safe, there are examples of coronavirus transmission on planes; most occurred before mandatory mask policies arrived, said Dr. Aisha Khatib, the chair of a group focused on responsible travel for the International Society of Travel Medicine.

"It may be argued that the most effective mitigation measure to date has been mandatory masking in-flight," Khatib said.

Freedman echoed this point. Once the mandate goes, he said, "I'm still going to wear my N95 the whole flight."

Some airlines and airports that have lifted mask mandates have also emphasized masks' value. Emma Gilthorpe, Heathrow's chief operating officer, said that even without the requirement she still would "recommend wearing them."

Should I wear one if I'm sniffing or tested positive?

The CDC continues to advise people to quarantine for five days if they test positive, regardless of symptoms. But, inevitably, some people who test positive will still get on a plane. To reduce the risk of transmission, they should wear a good mask.

In East Asia, long before the pandemic, wearing a mask in public if a person had a cold or flu was standard etiquette, noted Emma Teng, a professor of Asian Civilization at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who had studied the history of masks.

Teng believes that the pandemic could have a lasting effect on how Americans approach masks. "I think it's been relatively normalized for people to wear masks in public settings if they are feeling under the weather," she said.

What about babies and toddlers?

Parents of children younger than 5 have expressed mixed feelings about the mask mandate in the United States. The coronavirus vaccine is currently only available to children older than 5, giving many parents anxiety about placing their little one, who may be too young to wear a mask, amid so many unmasked travelers. On the flip side, many parents consider the current rule, which requires children as young as 2 to wear a mask, unreasonable.

"Under 3 is absolutely unrealistic to do the entire time," said Amanda Pendarvis Lacy, 31, who got kicked off a plane with her then 2-year-old son in September after he repeatedly pulled down his mask. She's not sure where she stands on a mask mandate for adults, but "I'd be relieved if he didn't have to wear it," she said.

HEADLINE	03/22 Chernobyl wildfires fear: radioactive smoke
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/03/22/world/ukraine-russia-war#wildfires-in-the-area-around-chernobyl-raise-fears-of-radioactive-smoke
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine — Wildfires have broken out in the radioactive forest that surrounds the Chernobyl nuclear plant, an area controlled by the Russian army, Ukrainian media reported Tuesday, raising worries that radiation could spread widely in the smoke if the fires burn unchecked.</p> <p>Forest fires are common in the spring and summer in the abandoned zone around the Chernobyl plant, where radiation levels are considerably lower than they were immediately after the 1986 accident but still pose risks.</p> <p>Typically, Ukraine sends dozens of firetrucks and hundreds of firefighters into the area to extinguish blazes as quickly as possible. But as this year's fire season begins, the Russian military is occupying the Chernobyl zone, having used the site to advance troops and tanks from Belarus toward the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv.</p> <p>The fiercest combat is about 50 miles south of the irradiated zone, in outlying towns around Kyiv. Any firefighting effort would have to come from Russia or Belarus unless Ukrainian firefighters are permitted to cross the front line, an unlikely proposition.</p> <p>Seven small fires are burning in the forest, Ukrainska Pravda, a Ukrainian news outlet, reported, citing a statement issued by parliament. It said the source of the fires was most likely artillery shelling or arson. There was no way to independently confirm the report.</p> <p>Usually, fires are started this time of year by lightning, by campfires or by farmers burning fields before the spring planting in areas near the zone. The statement said the fires had burned through an area estimated to be from 175 acres to 500 acres.</p> <p>In past years, even with free access for firefighters to the Chernobyl zone, spring fires have quickly spread beyond control. A major fire in early April 2020 burned more than 8,600 acres before it was contained, despite more than 100 firetrucks being dispatched to the area.</p> <p>Now, even rotating key Ukrainian personnel who manage the highly radioactive waste at the site has become entangled in the war. The crew at the site on the day of the invasion has been working under Russian military command for weeks. Over the weekend, 64 Ukrainian nuclear workers and other site personnel left the Chernobyl zone and were replaced by 46 Ukrainian nuclear sector employees who volunteered to cross the front to maintain the plant.</p> <p>One reactor was destroyed in the 1986 accident, and the other three are decommissioned. But nuclear waste at the site requires continual management. Some used fuel is held in pools, for example, and cannot be allowed to overheat.</p> <p>Radioactive smoke from wildfires in the area has been a persistent threat. Over the three decades since the accident, radiation has settled into the soil, posing little risk if left undisturbed. But the roots of moss, trees and other vegetation have absorbed some radiation, bringing it to the surface and spreading radioactive particles in smoke when it burns.</p> <p>John Boice, scientific director of the National Council on Radiation Protection and Measurements and a professor of medicine at Vanderbilt University in Tennessee, said he wasn't concerned about wildfire risks at Chernobyl.</p> <p>Serious radiation exposure from wildfire smoke was "highly unlikely," he said. "Unnecessary radiation is not a good thing, but we are talking about very small doses."</p>

	<p>Boice said one of the most concerning radioactive elements emitted from the Chernobyl accident, iodine, has a short half-life of eight days. While it led to excess thyroid cancers in children who drank milk from tainted cows after the accident, there was no radioactive iodine risk after about three months.</p> <p>Cesium, another element of radioactive concern, has a longer half-life, more than 30 years, and remains in the environment longer. But it is just about everywhere in low levels, spread by atmospheric nuclear tests during the Cold War in addition to Chernobyl's emissions, and the doses today from the power plant's releases in 1986 are low.</p> <p>Boice and colleagues did a study of the people forced to go into Chernobyl after the explosion and clean it up. They did careful medical exams, interviewed the men and followed them to see if there were excess cancers or deaths. They did see excess deaths — from suicides. "Fear of radiation is devastating," he said.</p> <p>The main risk from the fires comes from inhaling, via the smoke, small radioactive particles thrown years ago from the open core of the destroyed Chernobyl reactor.</p> <p>During the 2020 wildfires, increased levels of radioactive cesium were detected in some countries, including Belgium, Greece and the Netherlands. But an analysis found that in the Netherlands and Belgium, not all of the cesium came from the fires.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/22 Court blocks ICE 'priority' system arrests
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/03/22/ice-arrests-priority-system-blocked/
GIST	<p>A federal judge in Ohio has blocked some elements of the Biden administration's attempt to limit deportations by giving narrower "priorities" to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers, a ruling that potentially leaves more immigrants subject to arrest and detention.</p> <p>The preliminary injunction by U.S. District Court Judge Michael J. Newman, a Trump appointee, sided with Republican officials in Arizona, Montana and Ohio who sued to reverse the enforcement changes issued last year by Department of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas.</p> <p>Mayorkas' priority system directed ICE officers to focus on immigrants who pose public safety and national security threats, as well as recent border crossers who arrive illegally. Under President Donald Trump, ICE officers were afforded broad latitude to arrest and deport immigrants, angering many Democrats.</p> <p>Newman's ruling said some immigration violators had to be exempted from the narrower priorities, including those whose immigration or criminal violations are subject to mandatory detention rules, and those with pending orders to be deported from the United States within a 90-day period.</p> <p>Newman's decision comes days after ICE issued a report confirming that civil immigration arrests and deportations from the interior of the United States had reached their lowest levels in decades. Critics accused the Biden administration of failing to deport immigrants who committed crimes or remained in the United States without permission.</p> <p>But the Biden administration maintained that setting priorities made immigration enforcement more effective, such as targeting immigrants who pose a threat to their communities instead of people who have quietly lived and worked in the United States for years.</p> <p>Newman said he thought the states would likely succeed in their contention that the narrower priorities ran afoul of congressional intent, violated federal policymaking rules and placed an unfair burden on state budgets.</p> <p>"The States sue because they believe DHS skirted Congress's immigration enforcement mandates when it issued a policy that prioritizes certain high-risk noncitizens for apprehension and removal," Newman</p>

wrote in his decision. “At bottom, that is what this dispute is about: can the Executive displace clear congressional command in the name of resource allocation and enforcement goals?”

“Here, the answer is no,” he wrote.

Republican state officials celebrated the decision on social media.

“VICTORY: A federal judge just blocked the lawless Biden administration policy that halted nearly all deportations after our office challenged this guidance,” Arizona Attorney General Mark Brnovich said on Twitter. “Our office has been at the forefront of the fights for the rule of law this past year. Arizona deserves nothing less.”

ICE recorded 59,011 deportations during the 2021 fiscal year that ended last Sept. 30, according to an annual report released this month. That was the lowest total since 1995 and down from 185,884 deportations in 2020. Administrative arrests in the interior of the United States dropped to 74,082 from 104,000 during fiscal 2020 and an average of 148,000 annually between 2017 and 2019.

Mayorkas has met personally with teams of ICE officers to urge them to be more selective in their street-level enforcement operations. He has compared their work to police officers deciding whether to spend their time and resources arresting jaywalkers or going after violent criminals.

“Every administration has had priorities to guide enforcement decisions and there’s no basis in law for the court to treat the Biden administration’s priorities differently,” said Cody Wofsy, staff attorney at the American Civil Liberties Union’s Immigrants’ Rights Project, which submitted an amicus brief in the case.

The breadth of the order’s impact was not immediately clear, but it did not appear to make all 11 million undocumented immigrants in the United States an equal target for arrest.

Instead, the judge laid out specific instances in which the priorities may not apply. In some cases, Newman said ICE has discretion over whether to pursue a deportation. In other cases, such as people with certain criminal histories or recent removal orders, he wrote, Congress has made clear that officers should detain them.

ICE officials did not respond to questions about the ruling. The Department of Justice declined to comment.

Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost, a plaintiff in the lawsuit, cheered the ruling, saying it is a victory for those who want the executive branch to enforce federal laws. He said the decision is unlikely to affect immigrants with minor criminal records or who are still in immigration proceedings. But he said the ruling made clear that ICE does not have the authority to release immigrants Congress has ordered the agency to deport.

“They clearly have discretion in law enforcement,” he said in a telephone interview. “But at some point rulemaking is usurping the role of Congress, and we no longer have any checks and balances, we no longer have a separation of powers.”

Republicans have filed multiple lawsuits challenging the Biden administration’s immigration enforcement priorities. Federal judges in Florida and Arizona declined to interfere with the enforcement rules in separate cases last year. But U.S. District Court Judge Drew Tipton, a Trump appointee in Texas, halted the Biden administration’s 100-day pause on deportations early last year, then enjoined an “interim” draft of enforcement priorities and last month held a trial over the most recent enforcement guidance, but he has not yet issued a ruling.

[Return to Top](#)

SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/data/why-ukrainian-refugees-prefer-resettling-in-washington-state/
GIST	<p>With Russia’s invasion of Ukraine now in its fourth week, the human cost of war continues to mount. President Vladimir Putin’s widening bombardment of Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities has so far rendered nearly 3.5 million people refugees and has internally displaced an additional 6.5 million people, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.</p> <p>Last week, President Joe Biden said the U.S. will welcome Ukrainian refugees “with open arms.” But until Congress decides to grant Ukrainians humanitarian parole status to enter the country without a visa on humanitarian grounds — used last year to resettle more than 70,000 Afghan evacuees after the Taliban reconquered Afghanistan — it may be a while before those fleeing Ukraine arrive to the country.</p> <p>When they do, they are most likely to flock to Washington state, which is a growing hub for Ukrainians and Ukrainian refugees.</p> <p>Over the last 10 years, more Ukrainian refugees arrived in Washington than any other state in the U.S., according to a Seattle Times analysis of data from the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration. Their arrivals particularly increased after 2014 when Congress authorized refugee admission as the conflict in Eastern Ukraine with Russian separatists escalated.</p> <p>Since then, Ukrainian refugees are the single largest refugee group in Washington state, though the total number of refugee arrivals declined in the U.S. during the Trump presidency and since the start of the pandemic.</p> <p>An established immigrant community of Ukrainians in Washington state is one of the main reasons Ukrainian refugees choose to arrive here, said Oleg Pynda, executive director of the Ukrainian Community Center of Washington.</p> <p>Washington has the largest Ukrainian population in the U.S. after California and New York. Ukrainians are also the fastest growing European immigrant community in the state, U.S. Census Bureau data shows. A significant portion of Ukrainians live in the Seattle area, particularly Southeast Seattle and Kent, as well as in Pasco.</p> <p>Refugee organizations also attribute the state’s responsiveness to providing refugees with assistance as a major reason for the community’s growth. Overall, Washington state is one of the top initial resettlement destinations for refugees coming to the U.S., according to an analysis of refugee arrival data from the U.S. Department of State.</p> <p>“The state of Washington has been a very welcoming state for refugees so we have a strong resettlement network and a strong Ukrainian community,” said David Duea, executive director of the Lutheran Community Services Northwest.</p> <p>In the early 2000s, the state was home to one of the largest second migrations in the country, Pynda said. “They call it the second migration from Ukraine,” he said, referring to refugees initially assigned to volunteer agencies in different states eventually moving to Washington.</p> <p>“So many, for instance, would arrive in California, but then relocate to Washington because they found greater support here as churches and the community grew.”</p> <p>Another reason is the mild, temperate Pacific Northwest weather. “Climate-wise, Washington’s much better than California. It’s pretty much the same climate like in Ukraine and the summers are much easier here,” Pynda said.</p> <p>New arrivals also look to relocate to a region where they can find people who speak their language and know their culture so they can build relationships, said Mahnaz Eshetu, executive director of the Refugee Women’s Alliance.</p>

“They feel closer to the people who came here before them from their homeland,” Eshetu said. “It offers a comfort to merge into the community and establish yourself, because your people understand you better.”

Between October 2021 and February 2022, Washington state welcomed six more Ukrainian refugees than it did during the entire previous year when the pandemic disrupted international travel.

But since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, this stream of refugees into Washington has all but stopped, and the U.S. embassy there has closed.

“We are hoping that Congress will soon authorize refugees from Ukraine to enter into the U.S. through parole,” Pynda said.

For now, most Ukrainian refugees are fleeing to neighboring Eastern European countries Poland, Romania, Moldova, Hungary and Belarus, according to UNHCR, the United Nations refugee agency. Homeland Security [experts expect many will try to stay close to Ukraine](#) in the hopes that the war will end and they may be able to return to their homeland.

Still, agencies are preparing for an influx when Ukrainians do manage to secure refugee status or parole. Pynda said he expect new arrivals within the next six months.

While some Washingtonians have already come forward to support the resettlement of Ukrainian refugees, providing culturally sensitive mental health resources in multiple languages is a key concern for refugee organizations working on rehabilitation and resettlement.

“We’re going to see a lot with PTSD and other issues and, unfortunately, there are not so many mental health professionals who are bilingual and bicultural in a way that meets those needs,” Pynda said.

Washington’s existing Ukrainian community is already in need of these services, he said.

“We actually need it now because already there are many Ukrainians, especially elderly, who are here in the U.S. and anxious and depressed as their children are impacted by the war,” he said. “We have to enhance our mental health system to be ready to address that growth, especially when the new arrivals will be here.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/22 Seattle PD policing, public safety plan
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/crime/seattle-police-department-strategic-public-safety-plan/281-6e8a085b-aa03-4f1b-a969-f914f9c057ce
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — It is a pivotal point in policing, according to Chief Adrian Diaz of the Seattle Police Department.</p> <p>"The Seattle Police Department has hit the reset button," said Diaz.</p> <p>SPD's Strategic Plan report says community relations were pushed to the brink after the summer of 2020.</p> <p>"Since George Floyd was murdered, we have had massive change in our city in regard to policing," said Diaz.</p> <p>Today, the department is dealing with a historic drop in staffing levels and a rise in violent crime. Chief Diaz says gun violence has almost doubled since last year, and property crimes are up too.</p> <p>"We developed a heat map which shows where we are needed based on calls and where we are over present, where there is less call volume," said Brian Maxey, SPD's Chief Operating Officer.</p>

	<p>Maxey says the department is taking a data-driven approach to see if some 911 calls can safely have an alternative response to determine what calls could be served by an unarmed responder.</p> <p>SPD is also working on recruitment and retention.</p> <p>Between 2020 and November 2021 more than 325 officers left, according to SPD. The report says the department is at the lowest deployable patrol staffing levels since the 1980's when Seattle's population was almost half of what it is today.</p> <p>"Because we don't have as many specialty units is really kind of making every officer a generalist, so being able to be good at building relationships in the community, problem-solving, and then also being able to have the skillset to handle an active shooter situation," said Diaz.</p> <p>One recruiting and retention tool the department is considering is 10-hour shifts four days a week with three days off. Diaz says SPD is still working out the details of that kind of schedule with the police union.</p> <p>Moving forward, Diaz says he wants to rebuild the force and relationships within the community too.</p>
Return to Top	<p>Click on link to view SPD Strategic Plan 2022:</p> <p>http://seattle.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=10662648&GUID=01FFF5A3-B5ED-42F7-90AE-43FE61E3AC1B</p>

HEADLINE	03/22 TSA orders new 3-D baggage scanners
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/nation-world/tsa-3d-ct-scanners-airports/507-66991249-fa45-4f17-b29f-41be1a292364
GIST	<p>The Transportation Security Administration is buying more 3-D baggage scanners for airports that it says should cause lines to move faster. That's because they provide more detailed images of what is inside luggage.</p> <p>They are Computed Tomography (CT) x-ray systems, similar to what hospitals use. The TSA on Friday announced two orders to Analogic for 469 base and 469 full-size CT systems at a cost of \$781.2 million. Installation is expected to start this summer.</p> <p>The TSA previously announced a \$198 million contract with Analogic for 300 mid-size ConneCT x-ray scanners, which are currently being installed in airports. The company website said it can allow for up to 600 bags per hour.</p> <p>The TSA said the scanners create 3-D images of carry-on items. That means TSA officers will be able to get a 360-degree view of items inside the bag to determine if anything is a potential threat. That can also reduce the amount of false alarms, Analogic said on its website.</p> <p>The goal is to allow laptops and liquids to remain in the carryon as they go through the scanner. The TSA said laptops are already allowed to stay in the bag when using the 3-D technology.</p> <p>If a bag still needs extra screening, TSA will take it to the side to inspect it just as they do now.</p> <p>The systems would also offer "parallel divestiture stations." That means multiple passengers can remove the items in their pockets and their belts at the same time and place them on the conveyor rather than having to go one-by-one. This link shows what that may look like.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/22 US: Russia loses 10% of combat forces
SOURCE	https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/world/ukraine-war-latest-russia-loses-10-of-combat-forces-as-us-claims-kyiv-able-to-retake-territory/ar-AAVmni3?ocid=EMMX
GIST	Ukraine is "able and willing" to reclaim some of its territory after Russia reportedly lost more than 10 per cent of its combat force , according to US intelligence.

	<p>It comes after the Ukrainian military said on Tuesday it had retaken the strategically significant suburb of Makariv, north of Kyiv, and repelled an attack on the coastal city of Mykolaiv, just east of Odesa on the Black Sea.</p> <p>Russian soldiers are reportedly being removed from the frontlines because of low morale and even frostbite, an unnamed Pentagon official has said. “They’re struggling on many fronts,” the official said of the Russians. “We’re starting to see indications” that Ukraine is “now able and willing to take back territory”, <i>The Washington Post</i> quoted the official as saying.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Ukraine’s president Volodymyr Zelensky told the Italian parliament on Tuesday that his country was on the “brink of surviving” the war, before claiming Russian president Vladimir Putin wanted to “break through” to the rest of Europe.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/22 Seattle Starbucks votes to unionize
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Seattle-Starbucks-unionizes-in-coffee-giant-s-17021528.php
GIST	<p>SEATTLE (AP) — Baristas and other employees at a Seattle Starbucks have voted to unionize, the first such vote in the city where Starbucks originated and the latest in a nationwide push to organize the coffee shop chain.</p> <p>The unanimous vote announced Tuesday by the National Labor Relations Board is also an especially symbolic win as Howard Schultz returns as interim chief executive officer, The Seattle Times reported.</p> <p>The store in the Capitol Hill neighborhood will become the seventh in the country where employees have voted in favor of unionizing with Workers United, an affiliate of the Service Employees International Union. At least 140 more stores in 27 states have filed petitions for union elections.</p> <p>Starbucks announced March 16 that CEO Kevin Johnson was retiring. The company picked former longtime CEO Schultz as interim leader until it finds a permanent replacement by this fall. In his previous time with the company, the 68-year-old Schultz successfully fought attempts to unionize Starbucks’ U.S. stores and roasting plants.</p> <p>In a November letter to employees, posted just before the first unionization votes at three stores in Buffalo, New York, Schultz said he tried to create the kind of company that his blue-collar father never had the chance to work for.</p> <p>He recalled the “traumatic moment” his family had no income after his father suffered a workplace injury, and said that’s why Starbucks has benefits like health care, free college tuition, parental leave and stock grants for employees.</p> <p>Starbucks has had to reinstate fired workers or pay to settle labor law violations numerous times in the early 2000s.</p> <p>Last year, the national labor board found that Starbucks unlawfully retaliated against two Philadelphia baristas who were trying to unionize. The board said Starbucks monitored the employees’ social media, unlawfully spied on their conversations and then fired them. It ordered Starbucks to stop interfering with workers’ right to organize and offer reinstatement to the two workers.</p> <p>Last week, the board issued a complaint against Starbucks alleging that district and store managers in Phoenix spied on and threatened workers who supported unionizing. The complaint says Starbucks suspended one union supporter and fired another.</p> <p>Sydney Durkin, who works at the Seattle store, told the newspaper that in the past these may have been jobs people only stayed in for a few years, but increasingly they are becoming people's livelihood.</p>

	<p>“This is a signal for the larger food industry that it is changing and it is building toward something hopefully more sustainable,” Durkin said.</p> <p>“We will respect the process and will bargain in good faith ... We hope that the union does the same,” a Starbucks company spokesperson said in a statement.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/22 Seattle homelessness a housing problem?
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/homeless/is-homelessness-a-housing-problem-two-seattle-experts-make-their-case-in-new-book/
GIST	<p>There’s a big problem when it comes to fixing homelessness: The research-backed solution is not always the one the public agrees with.</p> <p>Gregg Colburn realized this shortly after moving to Seattle in 2017 to take a job as assistant professor of real estate at the University of Washington. Most people either see homelessness as an entirely individual problem, or a structural problem with the housing market or income inequality.</p> <p>Homeless people will also tell you varying reasons for what caused their homelessness — loss of employment, drugs and alcohol, and mental health place high on past surveys. Housing issues tend to fall lower on the list of answers, and are complicated: people say eviction, rising rent, domestic violence, or a family member kicking them out.</p> <p>But when Colburn compared cities with high and low numbers of homelessness based on poverty, drug use and mental health treatment factors, there was a clear answer that housing plays an outsize role in homelessness — and most academics have agreed on it for a while. It just hasn’t been embraced by the general public yet.</p> <p>So Colburn teamed up with Clayton Page Aldern, a data journalist who used to evaluate homelessness programs for Pierce County government, to write a peer-reviewed but plainly written guide in hopes that more people will embrace solutions that work to fix the problem. The result: “Homelessness Is a Housing Problem,” a book published this month by University of California Press.</p> <p>“Housing market conditions explain why high-poverty cities like Detroit and Cleveland have low rates of homelessness,” Colburn and Aldern write. “Housing market conditions also explain why some growing cities, like Charlotte, North Carolina, are not characterized by the levels of homelessness that coastal boomtowns like Boston, Seattle, Portland, and San Francisco are. ... High rental costs and low vacancy rates create a challenging market for many residents in a city, and those challenges are compounded for people with low incomes and/or physical or mental health concerns.”</p> <p>The Seattle Times sat down with Colburn and Aldern to discuss the book. The conversation has been edited for length and clarity.</p> <p>You lay out a prescription, a fix for homelessness, in this book. Can you describe it? Gregg Colburn: We need a lot more housing of all varieties. And that means we need more market rate housing, we need more middle income housing, we need more affordable housing, and we need more supportive housing for people with particular needs. And investments at all of those levels, both from public and private sources will, in my opinion, make a substantial difference in the crisis of homelessness.</p> <p>A metaphor in the book describes a game of musical chairs where one of the people, named Mike, is on crutches, and doesn’t get a chair when the music stops. You write that “the fundamental cause of Mike’s chairlessness was a lack of chairs, not his ankle injury. The rules of the game meant that someone had to lose.”</p>

Clayton Page Aldern: It's obvious from an analogy like that that we're also hinting at a supply problem. Were it not for the absence of a chair, Mike would have found a seat. And that should also pose an implicit question: Why is there a chair missing in the first place? And what would it take to bring another chair into that circle? Why can't we change the rules of the game?

When many people see folks on the street struggling with mental illnesses, or using drugs, or just in distress, their first thought is not "if only the rent were cheaper." It's often "this person needs treatment and serious support." If I'm one of those people with those doubts, what would you say to me?

Colburn: In West Coast cities, the observed problem of homelessness does not accurately reflect the entire problem. We are observing chronic unsheltered homelessness on our streets. And depending on the data source that you look at, that represents maybe 10 to 30% of the total homeless population. We could cure every case of substance use disorders and mental illness in Seattle among the unsheltered population, and we would still have one of the highest per capita rates of homelessness in the country. It might be less visible, and that might make us as a community feel better. But the reality is, we would still have a very, very large population of people experiencing homelessness.

Aldern: It's not immediately clear to me as an observer whether or not somebody with a given condition lost their housing with that condition, or came to it upon losing their housing. Living on the street for a year can be pretty traumatic. There's a lot of academic research out there that suggests these conditions [such as drug use and mental illnesses] don't exclusively cause homelessness per se as much as they are the results thereof.

Colburn: People say to me, "if Housing First [the idea that you should house someone before treatment] works, why do we still have the problem that we do with chronic unsheltered homelessness in Seattle?" And my answer is, "because Housing First needs a unit for it to work." The scarcity of units does undermine our community's ability to respond to chronic unsheltered homelessness.

To someone who says, "Will housing fix all of this? Or will there still be people on the street?," we say that Seattle has five times the homelessness of Chicago. But there's still homelessness, and there are people panhandling in Chicago. And so we aren't suggesting that accommodating housing markets will end all homelessness. What we're saying is, it doesn't need to be five times what Chicago is.

Homelessness expert Dennis Culhane, whom you quote in the book, recently told me that the homelessness provider community was never designed to solve homelessness; they were supposed to make sure people didn't freeze outside and maybe give them a meal. And over the years, we realized that this approach is itself part of the problem. I wonder if you would encourage local policymakers to focus less on funding the crisis system, and much more on funding housing?

Colburn: That is the central tension we face in our region. One of the reasons why it's really hard to be a City Council member, or the mayor or the county exec right now, is those people are having to confront this tension. And we've talked to a lot of people in preparing this book, people who study homelessness, and when we pose that question, everyone said, "it's not a fair question, because in a sense, we have to do both." And will that be costly? Yes, it will.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/22 Seattle Pride cuts Amazon as a sponsor
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/seattle-pride-cuts-amazon-as-a-sponsor/
GIST	<p>Seattle Pride has cut Amazon as a sponsor for its annual parade, citing financial support for lawmakers, organizations and legislation that does not support the LGBTQ community.</p> <p>Amazon has been a sponsor for the event in the past, Seattle Pride Executive Director Krystal Marx said, following the announcement Tuesday. But this time the company came in with a \$100,000 offer, significantly higher than past donations, and strings attached – including a request to call the annual celebration Seattle Pride Parade Presented by Amazon.</p>

It felt as if Amazon was trying to buy the event and the nonprofit itself, Marx said.

“It was important for us to really take a hard look at how do these values align with us,” she said. “This Pride Parade is for our community to celebrate, to remember Stonewall in 1969, to continue the fight for our rights, and we don’t feel it was possible to accept this money.”

Ahead of this year’s parade scheduled for June, Seattle Pride is requiring all corporate partners to participate in a diversity, equity and inclusion survey and evaluation process. That process is part of a larger movement around the country to prevent corporations from making what Seattle Pride described as “token gestures,” rather than actively supporting members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Amazon is the only corporate partner Seattle Pride has cut ties with following a deeper look into what lawmakers and organizations the company has supported, Marx said. The group has nine confirmed sponsors and is in conversation with 18 others.

Amazon says it “has long supported Seattle Pride because we believe that the rights of LGBTQ+ people must be protected,” according to a spokesperson for the company.

When evaluating corporate sponsors, Marx says the group started from the top, with the companies that offered the largest donations and stood to benefit the most from exposure and involvement with the parade.

Amazon has been a sponsor for the parade on and off since 2009. It has donated roughly \$42,000 since then, Marx said.

Its list of conditions for the 2022 contribution included featuring Amazon’s logo prominently along the parade route, ensuring that logo would be first and larger than other corporate partners on promotional materials and allowing an Amazon leader to make remarks at the parade. Marx said the parade typically doesn’t include speeches from corporate partners.

“There is a high likelihood it came from a place of wanting to support who we are,” Marx said. “It was the additional requirements that came with that, that really threw us for a loop. They wanted so much visibility at such a high level.”

Seattle Pride is also accusing Amazon of donating to politicians who support anti-transgender legislation, including two bills introduced in Washington, and supporting lawmakers who voted against the federal Equality Act, legislation that was meant to expand protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Amazon is a member of The Business Coalition for the Equality Act, a group of more than 500 businesses who have voiced support for the bill.

“Amazon engages with policymakers and regulators on a wide range of issues that affect our business, customers, and employees,” a spokesperson for the company said. “That does not mean we agree with any individual or political organization 100 percent of the time on every issue, and this includes legislation that discriminates or encourages discrimination against the LGBTQ+ community.”

Outside of its own donations, Seattle Pride accused Amazon of facilitating donations from its customers to anti-LGBTQ groups on its AmazonSmile platform, a program that lets online shoppers donate 0.5% of their Amazon purchase to a charity of their choice.

Amazon says nonprofits participating in the program cannot support or promote discrimination based on sex or sexual orientation, but Seattle Pride pointed to groups on the platform like Arkansas-based Family Council, which worked to pass a state constitutional amendment to define marriage “as the union of one man and one woman.”

	<p>“We simply cannot partner with any organization actively harming our community through the support of discriminatory laws and politics,” Seattle Pride said in its Tuesday statement.</p> <p>A spokesperson for Amazon said the fact that an organization has chosen to participate in the AmazonSmile program does not mean the company endorses its views.</p> <p>Seattle Pride is asking Amazon to remove organizations from the AmazonSmile program that have an anti-LGBTQ agenda and deny future requests from similar groups. It’s also asking the company to request the return of political donations to candidates introducing or supporting anti-LGBTQ legislation.</p> <p>Making the decision to cut Amazon as a sponsor wasn’t an easy one, Marx said, and it will affect the nonprofit’s finances.</p> <p>Amazon’s donation would have helped Seattle Pride reach its proposed budget, meaning job security for the organization’s four employees, investment in more accessibility resources and a guarantee that the parade and other events would be free.</p> <p>Still, Marx said the day following the announcement was one of the “most encouraging days” from her time running the nonprofit. “People have been cheering left and right,” she said.</p> <p>On Tuesday, Marx added, Seattle Pride received an anonymous donation with a note that read, “Amazon employee who is very proud of Seattle Pride for their announcement today.”</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/22 UW: omicron subvariant 25% cases tested
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/omicrons-subvariant-found-in-25-of-cases-tested-at-uw-virology-lab/
GIST	<p>The subvariant of omicron known as BA.2 accounts for about one-fourth of COVID-19 cases sequenced in Washington, according to the state’s largest genomic sequencing lab.</p> <p>The subvariant has steadily spread in the state, and across the country and Europe, but researchers are hopeful any potential wave of the new strain won’t cause as many infections, hospitalizations and deaths as the original version of the variant did.</p> <p>The new subvariant, which emerged in the United Kingdom in December, was identified in Washington in January and has remained at fairly low levels since then, state epidemiologist Dr. Scott Lindquist said last week. Now early data from the state Department of Health and the UW Medicine clinical virology lab show the proportion of cases involving the variant has increased over the past month or so.</p> <p>“It’s been sort of slowly creeping up over the last six weeks,” Alex Greninger, assistant director of UW Medicine’s virology lab and an assistant professor of lab medicine and pathology, said in a Tuesday statement. “It’s going to be interesting to see what the end of April, beginning of May, what that time period will look like.”</p> <p>While virologists don’t yet have a clear timeline for a potential rise in cases, Greninger encouraged residents to pay attention to their local COVID trends and assured people that vaccinations — particularly booster shots — will continue to protect against severe infection.</p> <p>“There’s great data that shows a BA.1 infection does protect against BA.2,” he said, referring to the different subvariants of omicron. “They’re very similar in that world from an immunological standpoint.”</p> <p>In Washington, BA.2 accounted for about 3.7% of the coronavirus variants sequenced in the first week of February, according to a recent DOH variant report. By the end of the month, the subvariant made up about 9.4%.</p>

	<p>Globally, the subvariant could already be slowing in some countries.</p> <p>The Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation — a research center at the University of Washington that’s been tracking COVID trends since the beginning of the pandemic — estimates the U.K. saw more than 270,000 daily infections last week, which also includes people who haven’t been tested. As of Tuesday, estimated infections were about 260,000, according to the institute’s data.</p> <p>The center also projects a steady decline in U.K. cases through April and May.</p> <p>Neither the United States nor Washington, meanwhile, have recorded a significant increase in COVID infections due to the subvariant. Data for the state, however, usually lags by at least a week.</p> <p>King County, which provides more recent data, reported an average of 163 daily infections, a 15% decrease in cases in the past week, on Tuesday. During the recent surge of omicron cases, the county peaked at an average of 6,642 daily infections in January.</p> <p>“Yes, we’ve detected [the current variant] for a month-plus now but it has not had the rapid increase like the initial omicron variant,” Lindquist said last week.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/22 Omicron subvariant 70% of new infections
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2022/03/22/omicron-ba2-us-dominant/
GIST	<p>The recently emerged version of the coronavirus called BA.2 that has driven a wave of cases in Europe now accounts for as much as 70 percent of new infections in many parts of the United States, according to an estimate from the genomics company Helix that could signal a new chapter in the third year of the pandemic.</p> <p>The estimate from Helix, which conducts genomic sequencing on virus samples, comes amid concerns that Europe’s surge in infections will be replicated in coming weeks in the United States, where caseloads have often trailed those in Europe by roughly a month.</p> <p>It’s clear BA.2, officially considered a subvariant of omicron, is gaining traction as the previously dominant lineage of omicron subsides. In two or three weeks, “everything in the Northeast is going to be BA.2,” predicted Jeremy Luban, a virologist at the University of Massachusetts Medical School.</p> <p>Natalie Dean, a biostatistics expert at Emory University, noted that Britain had only a brief lull between its omicron wave and a surge from BA.2. That surprised her, and she suspects it could be repeated in the United States.</p> <p>“I would have expected a longer lag period,” Dean said. “It tells me something could pick up here again, too, sooner than I would have guessed.”</p> <p>The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Tuesday reported that BA.2 accounts for 35 percent of coronavirus infections nationally, up from 22 percent a week ago. In New England, the CDC reported, BA.2 accounts for 55 percent of new infections, compared with 39 percent last week. The Helix data is more up to date and includes samples from many states, including California, Florida, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Michigan and Texas, Helix chief scientist Will Lee said.</p> <p>“I think cases are going to start going up again. I think I’m not going out on a limb too much in saying that,” Lee said.</p> <p>So far, no broad surge of new cases has emerged in the United States. There are so many variables at work when it comes to coronavirus transmission — including human behavior, perhaps the hardest factor to predict or measure — that disease experts cannot say with confidence whether and when a new wave will materialize. A wave of significant magnitude would be the sixth since the virus arrived in early 2020.</p>

Another surge probably would not be as intense as what was seen in the depths of winter, when omicron sickened tens of millions of people and killed tens of thousands in a matter of weeks. Nor is it obvious that a new wave of cases would shift dramatically the policies of the Biden administration and those of institutions and private businesses that are calling staffers back to the office.

Downtowns are busy again, and students have dropped masks in schools. A federal mask mandate for air travel remains in effect until April 18 but could be lifted at that point. More than 2 million people have gone through airport security checkpoints each of the past five days, according to Transportation Security Administration data, and although the numbers are not quite back to pre-pandemic levels, they are inching in that direction. Even the CDC is tentatively planning for employees to return to its Atlanta campus in mid-April.

As the country has moved firmly into a fully reopened position, the CDC has issued guidelines that make masking no longer recommended in 99 percent of the nation's counties. If there is a surge, the response appears likely to be governed at the personal level, as people decide whether and when to resume masking and social distancing.

"It would take a catastrophic event before we would see major restrictions put back in place," said Michael T. Osterholm, director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota.

Two years-plus into the pandemic, the United States is in a particularly uncertain situation because of a long list of unknowns that can dial up or dial down the number and severity of covid-19 cases. At the top of that list is genetic mutation: Disease experts remain wary about the virus's propensity to evolve in ways that boost transmission or evade immunity.

"We still don't have any clue where these variants come from," Jacob Lemieux, an infectious-disease doctor at Massachusetts General Hospital, said Monday in a Harvard Medical School media briefing. "I think the bottom line is that we are living next to this volcano. And the volcano has not erupted recently, and that's great. But we still don't know when the volcano erupts, why the volcano erupts and whether the next eruption is going to be bigger or less big than the last one."

But BA.2 is clearly a handful already. Whether it can drive a new wave of cases in the United States the way it has in many countries overseas is unclear. Scientists point out that although it has been described as a "subvariant" of omicron, BA.2 is quite different — as different from omicron as the delta variant is from the alpha variant, Luban said.

There is no evidence that BA.2 makes people sicker than its omicron progenitor, and experts believe that vaccines will continue to protect against severe outcomes from BA.2 as they have in cases involving other variants.

The level of immunity stockpiled in the population is not known precisely, and that's another variable in any forecast for the weeks and months ahead. Immunity, whether acquired through vaccines or natural infection, wanes naturally over time.

Vaccine makers have asked the Food and Drug Administration to give the go-ahead for a fourth shot for people who have received the initial series of two shots and a booster, with Pfizer-BioNTech seeking a fourth shot for people 65 and older, and Moderna for all eligible adults. Millions of adults, meanwhile, have never had a single shot, and millions more are vaccinated but have not availed themselves of a booster.

So that makes for a complex immunological landscape — explored anew by an evolving virus. Disease experts say that places that had low levels of natural infection, or have experienced low rates of vaccination and boosting, are particularly vulnerable to a new wave of infections.

Behavior is another factor. The virus leverages the social nature of human beings. Although BA.2 appears to be roughly 30 percent more transmissible than omicron, what may be even more significant is that it is spreading at a time when people are coming into contact with many more people.

“If you are beginning to make 10 times as many contacts as you were,” that will prove more significant than any transmission advantage BA.2 may have because of its mutations, said William Hanage, an epidemiologist at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

Although many experts anticipate a surge at some point, there is not a consensus on that. A new model from the University of Washington’s Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation forecasts no surge in the near term.

Ali H. Mokdad, an epidemiologist at the institute, said he expects another rise in cases late in the year, when cold weather returns in parts of the nation and people gather inside. But he believes there is a huge amount of immunity in the U.S. population following previous waves of infection, including the massive omicron-driven spike that ravaged workforces in the midst of this winter.

“People are ready to go into a bunker, saying what is happening in Europe will happen here. We don’t see it,” Mokdad said. “We see a slight bump but nothing big.”

Wastewater monitoring for the presence of the virus serves as an early-warning system, and there are signs of increased virus in some areas. That data remains spotty, however, and there is not yet a clear connection between wastewater data and caseloads in those locations.

Dean, of Emory, has been closely following the pandemic for more than two years and expects to see another rise in cases.

“Right now in the U.S., we’re past the big omicron wave, and we’re at a point where case levels are relatively low,” she said. “But we should expect oscillations in the future. Unfortunately, it’s just going to be a thing that we battle with for a while.”

Hanage said the virus has shown no sign it has stopped mutating and producing new variants: “It’s only wise to assume there’s going to be another one coming along. What the consequences of that will be is very difficult to say.”

Osterholm also thinks another wave is likely at some point, but he emphasizes the uncertainties, noting that the pattern of waves in the past has been quirky, with some regions of the United States hit hard even as others were spared.

“There’s a very high likelihood that we’re going to see increased cases in the United States. Whether you call it a wave — I’m not sure it will be uniform across the country,” Osterholm said. “This one could be different from the original omicron surge — what I call the viral blizzard — where basically it had impact everywhere. I don’t think it’s clear yet that this is going to happen with this one.”

He added that humility is absolutely essential because of the unpredictability of the coronavirus.

“This virus has continued to throw us 210-mile-an-hour curveballs,” he said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/22 Russians destroy Chernobyl laboratory
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/live-updates-russian-nobel-winner-sells-medal-for-refugees/
GIST	LVIV, Ukraine — Russian military forces have destroyed a new laboratory at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant that among other things works to improve management of radioactive waste, the Ukrainian state agency responsible for the Chernobyl exclusion zone said Tuesday.

	<p>The Russian military seized the decommissioned plant at the beginning of the war. The exclusion zone is the contaminated area around the plant, site of the world's worst nuclear meltdown in 1986.</p> <p>The state agency said the laboratory, built at a cost of 6 million euros with support from the European Commission, opened in 2015.</p> <p>The laboratory contained "highly active samples and samples of radionuclides that are now in the hands of the enemy, which we hope will harm itself and not the civilized world," the agency said in its statement.</p> <p>Radionuclides are unstable atoms of chemical elements that release radiation..</p> <p>In another worrying development, Ukraine's nuclear regulatory agency said Monday that radiation monitors around the plant had stopped working.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/22 Dissent brews over Putin's leadership
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/22/world/europe/putin-russia-military-planning.html
GIST	<p>In January, the head of a group of serving and retired Russian military officers declared that invading Ukraine would be "pointless and extremely dangerous." It would kill thousands, he said, make Russians and Ukrainians enemies for life, risk a war with NATO and threaten "the existence of Russia itself as a state."</p> <p>To many Russians, that seemed like a far-fetched scenario, since few imagined that an invasion of Ukraine was really possible. But two months later, as Russia's advance stalls in Ukraine, the prophecy looms large. Reached by phone this week, the retired general who authored the declaration, Leonid Ivashov, said he stood by it, although he could not speak freely given Russia's wartime censorship: "I do not disavow what I said."</p> <p>In Russia, the slow going and the heavy toll of President Vladimir Putin's war on Ukraine are setting off questions about his military's planning capability, his confidence in his top spies and loyal defense minister, and the quality of the intelligence that reaches him. It also shows the pitfalls of Putin's top-down governance, in which officials and military officers have little leeway to make their own decisions and adapt to developments in real time.</p> <p>The failures of Putin's campaign are apparent in the striking number of senior military commanders believed to have been killed in the fighting. Ukraine says it has killed at least six Russian generals, while Russia acknowledges one of their deaths, along with that of the deputy commander of its Black Sea fleet. U.S. officials say they cannot confirm the number of Russian troop deaths, but that Russia's invasion plan appears to have been stymied by bad intelligence.</p> <p>The lack of progress is so apparent that a blame game has begun among some Russian supporters of the war — even as Russian propaganda claims that the slog is a consequence of the military's care to avoid harming civilians. Igor Girkin, a former colonel in Russia's FSB intelligence agency and the former "defense minister" of Russian-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine, said in a video interview posted online on Monday that Russia had made a "catastrophically incorrect assessment" of Ukraine's forces.</p> <p>"The enemy was underestimated in every aspect," Girkin said.</p> <p>The Russian forces' poor performance has also surprised analysts, who predicted at the start of the war that Russia's massive, technologically advanced military would make short work of Ukraine. Putin himself seems to have counted on his troops quickly seizing major cities, including the capital, Kyiv, decapitating the government and installing a puppet regime under the Kremlin's control.</p> <p>"Take power into your own hands," Putin urged Ukrainian soldiers on the second day of the invasion, apparently hoping Ukraine would go down without a fight.</p>

Instead, Ukraine fought back. Nearly a month has passed, and Russian troops appear bogged down in the face of relentless attacks from a much weaker, though far more maneuverable, Ukrainian military.

“There was probably the hope that they wouldn’t resist so intensely,” Yevgeny Buzhinsky, a retired lieutenant general and a regular Russian state television commentator, said of Ukraine’s forces. “They were expected to be more reasonable.”

As if responding to criticism, Putin has said repeatedly in his public comments about the war that it is going “according to plan.”

“We can definitively say that nothing is going to plan,” countered Pavel Luzin, a Russian military analyst. “It has been decades since the Soviet and Russian armies have seen such great losses in such a short period of time.”

Russia last announced its combat losses three weeks ago — 498 deaths as of March 2. U.S. officials now say that a conservative estimate puts the Russian military death toll at 7,000. Russia says it lost a total of 11,000 service members in nearly a decade of fighting in Chechnya.

The failures in Ukraine have started to create fissures within Russian leadership, according to Andrei Soldatov, an author and expert on Russia’s military and security services. The top Russian intelligence official in charge of overseeing the recruitment of spies and diversionary operations in Ukraine has been put under house arrest along with his deputy, Soldatov said. Even Russia’s defense minister, Sergei Shoigu, who vacations with Putin and has been spoken of as a potential presidential successor, has suffered a loss of standing, according to Soldatov’s sources.

“It looks like everybody is on edge,” Soldatov said.

Soldatov’s claims could not be independently verified, and some independent experts have challenged them. But Shoigu has not been shown meeting with Putin in person since Feb. 27, when he and his top military commander, Gen. Valery Gerasimov, sat at the end of a long table as Putin, on the opposite end, ordered them to place Russia’s nuclear forces at a higher level of readiness.

“The war has shown that the army fights poorly,” Luzin, the Russian military analyst, said. “The defense minister is responsible for this.”

The battlefield deaths of senior Russian commanders also reflect poorly on the Kremlin’s war planning. Capt. Andrei Paliy, the deputy commander of Russia’s Black Sea fleet, died in combat over the port city of Mariupol, Russian officials said Sunday.

After Maj. Gen. Andrei Sukhovetsky, the deputy commander of the 41st Combined Arms Army, was killed four days into the war, the city of Novorossiysk, where he was previously based, issued a statement remembering him as “a faithful comrade, a valiant warrior, a wise commander and a selfless defender of the Fatherland.”

“Epaulets give no protection to terrorists,” Ukraine’s military intelligence service said in its statement announcing Sukhovetsky’s death.

There was also Maj. Gen. Oleg Mityayev, among the Russian military’s most seasoned commanders. He had led Russia’s largest foreign military base in Tajikistan and was second in command of Russia’s forces in Syria. When Putin ordered his troops to invade Ukraine, Mityayev was tapped to lead the storied 150th Motorized Rifle Division, whose soldiers helped take the Reichstag building in Berlin precipitating Nazi Germany’s defeat in 1945.

According to Kyiv, he lasted less than three weeks in Ukraine. After he was killed in battle, either Russian forces left his body behind, or it was captured by the far-right Azov Battalion, which posted a photo of the bloody corpse on Telegram with the caption, “Glory to Ukraine.”

Russian officials have not confirmed his death — or those of another four generals that Ukraine claims to have killed. But even accounting for the fog of war, experts say that Russia has suffered a damaging death toll among its military leaders on the ground in Ukraine, which could soon erode Russia’s military effectiveness.

The deaths reflect operational security failures as well as the challenges of the Russian military’s top-heavy command structure in the face of a much nimbler Ukrainian fighting force.

“In modern warfare, you don’t have a lot of generals getting knocked off,” said Lt. Gen. Ben Hodges, the former commander of the U.S. Army in Europe. “But this is a very lethal battlefield.”

Gen. Joseph L. Votel, the former commander of U.S. Central Command, said that the deaths could reflect Russia’s challenges on the ground — and reports that some Russian units did not understand the mission at hand and had even abandoned equipment. As a result, he said, military leaders appeared to be operating closer to the front to “supervise and keep their troops in the fight, by personal example or intimidation.”

“Continuing to lose senior leaders is not good,” he said in an email. “Eventually, loss of leadership affects morale, fighting prowess and effectiveness.”

For Russia’s generals, part of the problem is that many of them have spent recent decades fighting a different type of war. In Chechnya at the beginning of the 2000s, Russia succeeded in pacifying a separatist uprising in a small territory by resorting to scorched-earth decimation of entire cities. More recently in Syria, Russia’s operations have been driven by airstrikes against a population that lacks sophisticated weapons or even a regular army.

Ukraine, while far weaker militarily, has been learning from its eight-year war against Russian-backed separatist forces in the country’s east — a similar war, in miniature, to the one being fought now. Ukraine has its own air force, which remains largely intact, and modern anti-aircraft systems. As convoys of Russian armor have lumbered along Ukrainian highways, Ukrainian forces have deployed drones and highly maneuverable infantry units to devastating effect, leaving abandoned and burning vehicles.

Throughout Ukraine, Russian forces have now largely stalled. But analysts caution that the military setbacks will not deter Putin — who has cast the war at home as an existential one for Russia, and is increasingly signaling to the Russian public to prepare for a long fight.

The question is whether heavy losses and the pain of Western sanctions could force Putin to accept some kind of compromise to end the war — and whether President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine would be prepared to offer concessions to satisfy him. On Tuesday, Dmitry Peskov, the Kremlin’s spokesperson, played down any hopes of an imminent cease-fire, describing talks with Ukraine as going “much more slowly and less substantively than we would like.”

“The Russian leadership can’t lose,” said Andrei Kortunov, director-general of the Russian International Affairs Council, a research organization close to the Russian government. “No matter what, they will need to end this whole story with some kind of victory.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/22 US, Ukraine eye Putin propaganda bubble
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/technology/us-ukraine-quietly-try-to-pierce-putins-propaganda-bubble/

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. and Ukraine have knocked back Russian President Vladimir Putin's efforts to falsely frame the narrative of his brutal war, but they are struggling to get a more accurate view of the Kremlin's invasion in front of the Russian people.

While the Russian military suffers thousands of deaths and fails to capture key cities, Putin is intensifying his two-decade crackdown on information. The Kremlin has shut down Russia's last three independent media outlets, barred major social media platforms, created new laws against journalists who defy its propaganda and insisted on calling the war a "special military operation."

The result is a Russian public with little to no access to any alternative to Putin's own anti-Ukraine, anti-Western narrative. It's a heat shield for Putin against any backlash to the war and Western sanctions that have crippled Russia's economy.

Breaking through Putin's propaganda bubble is a key strategic goal for Ukraine and its Western allies. They have tried a series of actions, overt and subtle, to reach ordinary Russians, from encouraging the use of software that circumvents internet blocks to having government briefings for TikTok influencers. The hope is independent voices still operating in Russia, those from the West, and direct pleas from Ukrainians can convince the masses that they're being lied to about the war next door.

The question is no longer "what we do to stop disinformation," former U.S. ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul said, it's how to promote information inside Russia. "Very hard question," he added.

Among the most important steps, he said, is to "fund Russian independent media working outside of Russia."

The Associated Press spoke to half a dozen current and former officials in the U.S. and Ukraine about the challenge. American officials acknowledged that any direct rebuttals of Russian disinformation could be quickly dismissed by Moscow as American propaganda.

Instead, they said, the Biden administration is trying to foster the flow of outside information and make it easier for ordinary Russians to learn the truth about the war themselves. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal strategy.

Many Western companies have stopped doing business in Russia. Quietly, though, U.S. officials have encouraged internet service providers to stay, calculating that Russians need to have the means to find outside information online. Celebrities already well-known in Russia, like Arnold Schwarzenegger, have used Twitter and Telegram to share messages and videos speaking of the atrocities of the war.

McFaul called the Schwarzenegger bit "brilliant," adding: "Those kinds of pieces, though, should be happening every day."

Ukraine has shaped much of the West's perception of the war with videos and social media posts highlighting Russian attacks on civilians and destruction of Ukrainian neighborhoods. And President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has won admiration around the world for his direct-to-camera speeches that are posted and shared online. Zelenskyy, in his last speech before the invasion pleading for peace, noted, "I know that they won't show my address on Russian TV."

The Biden administration has continued to declassify intelligence findings about what it says are Putin's war plans to undercut his ability to carry them out. The U.S. is also increasing funding for its traditional means of reaching audiences in Eastern Europe, adding \$25 million this month for the U.S. Agency for Global Media, which oversees Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and Voice of America.

Voice of America posted online instructions on how to access its site using a virtual private network, or VPN, or through other means of circumventing Kremlin barriers. The broadcaster's internal statistics suggest thousands of Russians are using those methods.

And the White House met recently with influencers on TikTok, a meeting that sparked some eye-rolling but that a handful of participants said they found helpful.

“The idea of having a White House press briefing with TikTokers who are sharing news ... it’s a brilliant idea,” said Kahlil Greene, who describes himself on TikTok as a “Gen Z Historian Follow for History and Politics” and has 550,000 followers. “There’s an understanding that TikTok is expansive beyond borders. Some of these people have millions of followers that cross outside of the U.S.”

But TikTok this month barred new uploads and livestreaming from Russia. In a further crackdown Monday, Russia banned Facebook and Instagram entirely. Twitter, meanwhile, has been difficult for Russians to access. The Kremlin also suspended the BBC Russian service, German broadcaster Deutsche Welle and Latvia-based website Meduza. And, on Tuesday, international news channel Euronews said it had been blocked from broadcasting in Russia.

Some social media platforms and news organizations have worked around the bans and government surveillance, using a privacy-protected “onion” service. Russian users can access a version of Twitter if they download the Tor browser, which allows people to access sites on what is also referred to as the “dark web.” Instead of .com, onion sites have a .onion suffix. The Russian authorities have had some success blocking those sites, however, too.

It’s hard to measure whether any of those efforts are working, but research done in other nations shows that these type of barriers to information make it just hard enough to deter people from persevering.

“It’s not impossible to jump the great firewall,” said Shelby Grossman, a research scholar at the Stanford Internet Observatory on Russian disinformation on social media. “But the fact that you have to install a VPN to do it could deter people. These tiny frictions have real effects on people.”

Another problem is reaching those who don’t want to be reached, which is also an issue for Americans. Millions in the U.S., for example, wrongly believe the 2020 election was stolen despite an untold number of efforts to debunk falsehoods about voter fraud.

It’s a misinformation environment that the Kremlin relishes, and has helped promote with influence operations against Russia’s adversaries.

Russian state media continues to echo false and unsupported claims about Ukraine’s government and alleges that it requires “de-Nazification.” It has lied about the Russian military’s attacks on civilian targets and its destruction of entire neighborhoods.

Thomas Rid, a professor at Johns Hopkins University and expert on disinformation, noted that the U.S. “doesn’t really have a great track record” on countering false narratives.

“The way I would play this is via Ukraine,” he said. “It has the proximity, the language skills, the family links. We need to help them first and foremost to win and retain access to information.”

Zelenskyy came to the presidency with skills well-suited for an information war. He was a showman who played a president on television and founded a successful production company. Shortly after he took office, Ukraine became the focus of former President Donald Trump’s first impeachment, an international story that ended up giving Zelenskyy’s team valuable training for global information challenges.

Ukraine also has three decades of history as a former Soviet republic that has long had to defend against Moscow’s political influence campaigns and cyberattacks.

“We have way more experience and way more practice,” said Igor Novikov, an expert on information tactics who served as a Zelenskyy campaign adviser and remains close to members of the president’s inner circle. On some aspects of countering disinformation, Novikov said, “the U.S. is five years behind us.”

	<p>Novikov said he believes celebrities already respected in Russia, like Schwarzenegger, and people trained on how to talk to their relatives will have more success than sending mass text messages or using other less tailored tactics.</p> <p>“When you’re dealing with somebody that’s been dealing with an alternate reality, it’s a bit like working to plant a conspiracy theory in a good way,” Novikov said. “You need to break the bubble with trust and choice.”</p>
Return to Top	

Cyber Awareness

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	03/22 Crypto implicated in child porn, terrorism
SOURCE	https://www.coindesk.com/policy/2022/03/22/crypto-implicated-in-child-porn-terrorism-french-official-says-calling-for-end-to-online-anonymity/
GIST	<p>Crypto transfers are being used to fund terrorism in Syria and Iraq and child pornography in Southeast Asia, the head of France’s financial intelligence unit said Tuesday.</p> <p>Guillaume Valette-Valla, director of Tracfin, the country’s anti-money laundering body, told lawmakers at the European Parliament that even those making small online payments should be forced to reveal their identity. Such small anonymous transactions shouldn’t be allowed, he added.</p> <p>The warning comes as the European Central Bank’s Christine Lagarde warned of cryptocurrencies' role in evading the financial sanctions placed on Russia after its invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>“We have observed several times the use of crypto assets from Europe” being used to fund “terrorism, and complicity with terrorism, in the Syria-Iraq region,” Valette-Valla told a joint session of the European Parliament's economic and civil liberties committees Tuesday.</p> <p>Similar cases relating to child pornography were “sadly recurrent,” he added, saying that last week he had transferred three cases to the public prosecutor in which small transactions had been made to view live cases of child abuse in Southeast Asia.</p> <p>Valette-Valla’s organization, Tracfin, is part of the French economics ministry and is responsible for gathering intelligence on suspected illicit finance from financial companies and other sources, passing its findings to judicial authorities for potential prosecution.</p> <p>“Your assembly could give a big plus to our operational activity” by ensuring “deanonymization from the first euro” of a crypto payment, he said, saying that individual transfers linked to criminal activity were sometimes under 10 euros (US\$11).</p> <p>The lawmakers are currently considering plans to extend existing payment transparency rules to the crypto sector in a way that could end online anonymity altogether.</p> <p>Under these rules, known colloquially as the travel rule, conventional bank transfers need to identify parties involved in any transaction over 1,000 euros, with suspicious transactions passed on to the authorities. But lawmakers are leaning towards abolishing that lower threshold for crypto transactions because large digital payments can easily be broken up into smaller chunks that evade detection, a practice known as smurfing.</p> <p>Assita Kanko, the Belgian lawmaker responsible for marshaling the European Parliament’s views on the new proposals, seems undeterred by the backlash to those plans from the crypto industry, and might even extend the proposals further into crypto holdings that are held privately rather than via intermediaries.</p>

	<p>“I’m convinced that proper regulation of crypto transfers will help, not harm, the growth and innovation in this sector. It will increase trust and help our authorities to push back against abuse,” Kanko said at the hearing. “We are discussing proposals to include transfers involving unhosted wallets while working on guarantees for personal data protection.”</p> <p>Kanko appeared to gain support from global money laundering standard setters the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).</p> <p>“The scale of use of unhosted wallets is not to that extent that we are worried currently, but I think we closely have to observe it,” FATF President Marcus Pleyer told lawmakers. “There might come the moment when we have to indeed take them into the scope of the regulation.”</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/22 Kentucky hospital details cyberattack
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/breach/amid-recovery-kentucky-hospital-details-cyberattack-discovered-in-january
GIST	<p>Amid its continued recovery efforts, Taylor Regional Hospital (TRH) in Kentucky notified patients this week that the cyberattack began with a systems hack, which led to the access of their protected health information.</p> <p>The notification comes well ahead of the 60-day timeline required by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act. The transparency can empower patients to take quick action to monitor for and prevent potential fraud attempts.</p> <p>As previously reported, TRH first reported a phone and network outage at the end of January that led to the deployment of electronic health record downtime procedures. The hospital later confirmed that all systems were brought down by a cyberattack.</p> <p>The hospital has been able to maintain care operations throughout the nearly 10-week outage, with patients rallying support for hospital clinicians on social media. A website notice has been updated with each step of the recovery process, including instructions for patients to bring paper medical histories and to expect long delays at appointments, particularly at the walk-in clinic.</p> <p>The latest update provides more details into the attack methods and the hospital’s response. On Jan. 20, TRH first identified suspicious activity on its computer systems and took steps to contain the incident. Law enforcement was notified, and the hospital began to investigate with support from a third-party cybersecurity firm.</p> <p>Although the investigation is ongoing, TRH determined the systems access began back on Nov. 2, 2021, and continued until Jan. 19, 2022. During the hack, the threat actor exfiltrated “certain files” from the network. The investigation also found the attacker possibly accessed information stored on other systems.</p> <p>A review of the stolen files has concluded the patient-related information included names and one or more data points, such as Social Security numbers, contact information, dates of birth, insurance details, medical record numbers, and or clinical information tied to care received at TRH.</p> <p>TRH will send notifications to the impacted patients in the coming weeks and is encouraging patients to review statements from their providers or insurers to defend against fraudulent activity. The hospital is currently bolstering the security of its systems and data stores.</p> <p>Currently, the TRH website shows all phone lines have been restored outside of two oncology departments. The main phone lines were finally restored on March 4, with the majority of the phone lines following in short order.</p>

	However, it also appears there are continued outages at the lab services department. While normal hours have resumed, patients are still being urged to bring written prescription orders and a list of current medications to their appointments. Social media posts show some patients are also continuing to report access issues with the patient portal.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/22 'Secrets sprawl' software supply chain
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/secrets-sprawl-haunts-software-supply-chain-security
GIST	<p>A cybersecurity startup is warning of a major, unattended weak link in the software supply chain: the vexing problem of valuable corporate secrets -- API keys, usernames and passwords, and security certificates -- publicly exposed in corporate repositories.</p> <p>The compromise of leaked secrets has been at the center of multiple supply-chain security compromises but, according to new data from GitGuardian, secrets sprawl exists everywhere and is growing at alarming rates.</p> <p>In a new report documenting its work looking for leaked corporate secrets, GitGuardian found that a typical company with 400 developers would discover about 1,050 unique secrets leaking throughout its repositories and commits.</p> <p>Even worse, at current security-to-developer staffing levels, the company argues “there’s simply no way to manage the explosion of digital authentication credentials left exposed in modern code.”</p> <p>“With each secret detected in 13 different places on average, the amount of work required for remediation far exceeds current AppSec capabilities: with a security-to-developers ratio of 1:100*, 1 AppSec engineer needs to handle 3,413 secrets occurrences on average,” GitGuardian said.</p> <p>The Paris, France-based startup, which raised \$44 million in venture capital investment to work on solving the secrets sprawl problem, said this is an ongoing “nightmare” for security engineers.</p> <p>“Credentials are a nightmare for security engineers because they can end up in so many places: build, monitoring, or runtime logs, stack traces, and ... git history. Our data show the extent of publicly exposed secrets on GitHub has more than doubled since 2020,” GitGuardian said.</p> <p>After running scans in 2021, the company found more than 6 million secrets exposed, including IAM credentials across all major public cloud infrastructure. “On average, 3 commits out of 1,000 exposed at least one secret, a 50% increase compared to 2020.”</p> <p>In addition to GitHub, GitGuardian’s report also called attention to sensitive information exposed in Docker Hub images.</p> <p>“The layers making up Docker images are as many additional attack surfaces that can too easily be left out of the security perimeter. For attackers, it is yet another chance of finding an access vector, just as demonstrated by the Codecov breach,” the company said, referencing the April 2021 supply chain compromise that rattled much of Silicon Valley.</p> <p>“If there is a single conclusion to be drawn from [this data], it is that the amount of work required for both remediating real-time incidents and investigating leaks detected in the git history (which can still represent a threat) far exceeds current AppSec teams' capabilities,” the company warned.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/22 Chinese hackers custom malware exposed
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/custom-macos-malware-of-chinese-hackers-storm-cloud-exposed/

Researchers have discovered a previously unknown macOS malware variant called GIMMICK, which is believed to be a custom tool used by a Chinese espionage threat actor known as 'Storm Cloud.'

The malware was discovered by researchers at Volexity, who retrieved it from the RAM of a MacBook Pro running macOS 11.6 (Big Sur), which was compromised in a late 2021 cyberespionage campaign.

The exposure of custom malware used by sophisticated threat actors isn't common. Those groups operate very carefully, leaving a minimal trace and wiping remnants of the malware to keep their tools secret and evade IoC-based detection.

However, sometimes even the most advanced cybercriminals slip up and leave behind malware that can then be dissected by security researchers, as is the case with GIMMICK.

Dissecting the GIMMICK malware

GIMMICK is a multi-platform malware written in Objective C (macOS), or .NET and Delphi (Windows). All variants use the same C2 architecture, file paths, behavioral patterns, and heavily abuse Google Drive services, so it's tracked as one tool despite the code differences.

GIMMICK is launched either directly by the user or as a daemon on the system and installs itself as a binary file named 'PLIST,' usually mimicking a heavily used application on the target machine.

Next, the malware initializes by performing several data decoding steps and eventually establishes a session to Google Drive, using hard-coded OAuth2 credentials.

After initialization, GIMMICK loads three malware components, namely DriveManager, FileManager, and GCDDTimerManager, with the first being responsible for the below actions:

- Manage the Google Drive and proxy sessions.
- Maintain a local map of the Google Drive directory hierarchy in memory.
- Manage locks for synchronizing tasks on the Google Drive session.
- Handle download and upload tasks to and from the Google Drive session.

Each infected system's hardware UUID is used as an identifier for the Google Drive directory that corresponds to it.

FileManager manages the local directory where C2 information and command tasks are stored, and the GCDDTimerManager undertakes the management of the various GCD objects.

The commands supported by GIMMICK, which arrive on the system in AES-encrypted form, are the following:

- Transmit base system information
- Upload file to C2
- Download file to client
- Execute a shell command and write output to C2
- Set client Google Drive timer interval
- Set client timer interval for client info heartbeat message
- Overwrite client work period information

"Due to the asynchronous nature of the malware operation, command execution requires a staged approach. Though the individual steps occur asynchronously, every command follows the same." [explains Volexity](#) in its technical report

It is this asynchronous design that makes GIMMICK so robust and at the same time complex, so porting it on a new platform, macOS in this case, is a feat that underscores Storm Cloud's skills and resources.

Volexity notes that the possibility of Storm Cloud buying the malware from a third-party developer and using it exclusively shouldn't be ruled out.

Protect against GIMMICK

Apple has also rolled out new protections to all supported macOS versions with new signatures for XProtect and MRT, which should be able to block and remove the malware since March 17, 2022. To ensure you have received these signatures, follow [Apple's support page instructions](#).

To prevent GIMMICK and similar malware from establishing a foothold on your macOS, start by applying the available system updates for your device, which will also fetch the latest detection signatures.

Next, ensure that XProtect and MRT are enabled and actively running on the system.

Advanced measures include using network traffic monitoring tools and EDR solutions to detect the launch of daemons on endpoints.

Volatility has also published a list of GIMMICK's indicators of compromise (IoCs) and [YARA rules](#), which can help defenders detect and stop the malware.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/22 Top Russia meat producer suffers attack
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/top-russian-meat-producer-hit-with-windows-bitlocker-encryption-attack/?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>Moscow-based meat producer and distributor Miratorg Agribusiness Holding has suffered a major cyberattack that encrypted its IT systems, according to a report from Rosselkhoz nadzor - the Russian federal veterinary and phytosanitary supervision service.</p> <p>The announcement notes that the attackers leveraged the Windows BitLocker feature to encrypt files, essentially performing a ransomware attack.</p> <p>According to the agency, the reason behind the attack appears to be sabotage and not financial, since Miratorg is one of Russia's largest and food suppliers.</p> <p>The point of compromise was VetIS, a state information system used by veterinary services and companies engaging in the field, making it likely a supply chain compromise, although more clarification is needed in this regard.</p> <p>"Probably, this incident is a manifestation of the informational and economic "total war" that the collective West unleashed against Russia. We are pushed to this assumption by the fact that during the entire existence of VetIS (more than 10 years) and tens of thousands of Russian and foreign software systems integrated with it, this has never happened," Rosselkhoz nadzor (machine translated)</p> <p>"Of course, one can assume that this is just a coincidence, but given the ongoing attacks on VetIS itself, this assumption seems extremely unlikely to us – the time that has passed since the West declared this war on us is too short," the agency added.</p> <p>The incident has affected the following companies, all subsidiaries of Miratorg Holding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• FATEZHSKAYA YAGNYATINA• BRYANSKY BROILER• MIRATORG-KURSK• BRYANSKAYA MEAT COMPANY• SVINOKOMPLEKS KURASOVSKIY• PRODMIR• SVINOKOMPLEKS KOROČA• TRIO-INVEST• BELGO GEN

- AGROFIRMA "BLAGODATENSKAYA
- MIRATORG ZAPAD
- TRADING COMPANY "MIRATORG
- SVINOKOMPLEKS SAFONOVSKII
- SVINOKOMPLEKS PRISTENSKIY
- MIRATORG-BELGOROD
- VOZROZHDENIE
- KALININGRAD MEAT COMPANY
- SVINOKOMPLEKS KALINOVSKII

Miratorg has also [published a statement](#) saying it is already working towards eliminating the consequences and restoring the normal functioning of its business. The firm promised that attack the will not affect its supply and shipments to Russian citizens, indicating limited impact on its delivery operations.

The company also had the following statement about the attacker's motivation (machine translated):
In light of the increasing hacker attacks on the country's largest enterprises and government agencies, it can be assumed that this incident was carried out as unfriendly towards one of the country's largest meat processing holdings.

To reduce the impact of the cyberattack, the federal agency will assist Miratorg and its subsidiaries in transporting goods by temporarily lifting the strict documentation requirements for the movement of products.

Moreover, it will accept hand-written certificates and give access to the federal platform (Mercury) to issue formal papers where needed.

To ease customer concerns about the safety of the food during these critical times, Rosselkhoz nadzor underlines that Miratorg has a track record of good reputation, so this exception is being made by taking that into account.

Finally, the agency recommends all companies in Russia using VetIS to create backups of their files and databases on non-volatile media, and to leave "excessive formalism" aside and help each other.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/22 Ransom attack Greece postal service
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/greeces-public-postal-service-offline-due-to-ransomware-attack/?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>ELTA, the state-owned provider of postal services in Greece, has disclosed a ransomware incident detected on Sunday that is still keeping most of the organizations services offline.</p> <p>An initial statement about the attack came on Monday, when ELTA announced the cause of a service disruption, claiming that its immediate response and isolation of the entire data center has helped mitigate the impact.</p> <p>In a new announcement today, the organization has shared more details about the incident and updated its customers about the extent of the service outages.</p> <p>More specifically, its IT teams have determined that the threat actors exploited an unpatched vulnerability to drop malware that allowed access to one workstation using an HTTPS reverse shell.</p> <p>The ultimate goal of the cyberattack, according to today's press release, was to encrypt systems critical to ELTA's business operation. The organization does not mention anything about a ransom demand.</p> <p>Bleeping Computer has reached out to the organization for more details about the attack but our repeated attempts have remained unanswered.</p>

Since most ransomware attacks these days come with a data theft component, the threat actors might have had access to customer names, addresses, and even payment details, but this has not been confirmed. The Greek consumer data protection authority has been informed accordingly, so if there has been a data breach, it will be determined independently.

Country-wide service disruption

Currently, ELTA can't offer services of mail post, bill payments, or process any form of financial transaction order. The organization has no estimate of when these services will be made available again.

On the ELTA Facebook page, users are also reporting problems tracking their parcels and not having access to the web labeling services.

At this time, the agency's IT teams are thoroughly examining more than 2,500 computers, installing security software tools, and ensuring that all malicious payloads have been uprooted before they re-integrate them into the network.

The presence of a single backdoor may give threat actors access to ELTA's entire corporate network through lateral movement, attempting large-scale encryption again.

Until all systems have been checked and services return to normal, the agency has advised customers to use its subsidiary instead, ELTA Courier, which [has not been impacted](#) by the cyberattack.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/22 Social engineering attacks to rule in Web3
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/social-engineering-attacks-to-dominate-web3-metaverse-services/?web_view=true
GIST	<p>Researchers predict that a surge in social engineering attacks will dominate web3 and the metaverse.</p> <p>Web3 is the term coined for what could become the next face of the internet. The web has shifted from pages containing content to the growth of social media, and now, the concept of a decentralized internet is being discussed under the Web3 banner.</p> <p>Part of this transformation could include the 'metaverse' -- a 3D environment and virtual world for facilitating social connections, whether personal or for work. Your ID in the metaverse may also end up linked to cryptocurrency wallets, Non Fungible Tokens (NFTs), and various smart contracts.</p> <p>As technology vendors work on these concepts, cybersecurity researchers from Cisco Talos have offered their perspective on the potential threats Web3, and the metaverse will face.</p> <p>The recent phishing wave experienced by OpenSea users, in which victims were duped into signing off on malicious contract transactions and handing over their NFTs, may highlight the forms of attack we may see more commonly in the future.</p> <p>The first issue discussed by the team is the use of the Ethereum Name Service (ENS) and potentially upcoming similar services that are used to compact wallet addresses into a format that can be remembered easily.</p> <p>As some of us speculate on the potential future value of ENS domains and register them -- such as 'businessname.eth' -- these addresses could be used as leverage in phishing attacks, especially as ENS domains are recorded on the blockchain and cannot be removed through trademark disputes easily.</p> <p>"It may come as no surprise that ENS domains such as cisco.eth, wells Fargo.eth, foxnews.eth and so on are not actually owned by the respective companies who possess these trademarks, but rather they are owned</p>

by third parties who registered these names early on with unknown intentions," Talos says. "The risk here is obvious."

In addition, those that register an ENS domain may use their names, deanonymizing an address and signaling to others what funds an individual has in their cryptocurrency wallet, potentially increasing their risk of being selectively targeted by a threat actor.

A brief search by Cisco Talos on .ENS domain holders who publicized their address revealed a number of 'whales' holding vast amounts of cryptocurrency and some rather lucrative NFTs.

A number of holders also reveal their home towns, full names, and social media profiles -- giving attackers a broader picture of individuals to target in social engineering attacks.

"For many, identifying their real-world identities and physical locations starting from the ENS domain and Twitter account was almost trivial," the researchers say.

As Web3 will be a new concept that users will need time to learn about, a general lack of education may also make individuals more susceptible to scams and fraud.

"Unfamiliar technology can often lead users into making bad decisions," Cisco Talos says. "Web3 is no exception. The vast majority of security incidents affecting Web3 users stem from social engineering attacks."

In addition, wallet cloning -- already a threat in practice -- may become a more popular attack method in the future. This requires victims to give up their seed phrase, the secret key used to retrieve lost wallets and may be requested through social engineering, acting as customer support, or by tricking wallet holders in fake verification processes.

While Web3 is still in development, it is worth taking the time to familiarise yourself with this technology -- especially if you plan to explore the decentralized world in the future.

Cisco Talos also recommends implementing basic security measures, password managers, multi-factor authentication (MFA), and most importantly, remembering that you should never hand over your seed phrases.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/22 New wave DeadBolt ransomware attacks
SOURCE	https://securityaffairs.co/wordpress/129373/malware/qnap-nas-deadbolt-ransomware.html?web_view=true
GIST	<p>Internet search engine Censys reported that QNAP devices were targeted in a new wave of DeadBolt ransomware attacks.</p> <p>Since January, DeadBolt ransomware operators are targeting QNAP NAS devices worldwide, its operators claim the availability of a zero-day exploit that allows them to encrypt the content of the infected systems.</p> <p>Once encrypted the content of the device, the ransomware appends <i>.deadbolt</i> extension to the name of the excerpted files and deface the login page of the QNAP NAS to display the following message:</p> <p><i>"WARNING: Your files have been locked by DeadBolt"</i></p> <p>The hijacked QNAP login screen displays a ransom note demanding the payment of 0.03 BTC ransom (roughly \$1277) to receive a decryption key to recover the files.</p> <p>The ransom note also includes a link titled "important message for QNAP," which points to a page that offers technical details of the alleged zero-day vulnerability in QNAP NAS devices for 5 BTC (approximately \$212,000).</p>

Ransomware operators are also offering for sale the QNAP the master decryption key for 50 BTC which could allow all the victims of this ransomware family to decrypt their files.

At the end of January, QNAP [forced the firmware update](#) for its Network Attached Storage (NAS) devices to protect its customers against the [DeadBolt ransomware](#).

In February, storage solutions provider Asustor [warned](#) its customers of a wave of [Deadbolt ransomware](#) attacks targeting its NAS devices.

Now Censys reported that the number of QNAP devices infected with DeadBolt peaked in January. On January 26, around 5,000 of the 130,000 QNAP NAS devices exposed online were infected by ransomware.

"At its peak on January 26th, 2022, Censys observed 4,988 Deadbolt-infected services out of the 130,000 QNAP devices currently on the internet. If every victim had paid the ransom, this attack would have netted the hackers about \$4,484,700." reads the post published by Censys. "Fortunately, QNAP jumped into action with a forced firmware update that allegedly fixed the issue ([which had its own set of problems](#)), and for the next few months, the infections declined to less than 300 devices. It was looking like this problem was behind us."

After QNAP [forced the firmware](#) security update, the number of infections dropped to less than 300 in March.

Unfortunately, the number of infections raised again over the past few days, and [querying the Censys Internet search engine](#), we can determine that currently there are 1308 infected QNAP NAS devices.

However, there has been a surge in [QNAP device infections](#) over the past days. In a blog post published on Monday, Censys said there had been 1,146 hacked devices on March 19. At the time of writing, on March 22, that number had gone up to nearly 1,500.

"At this time, Censys cannot state whether this is a new attack targeting different versions of the QTS operating system, or if it's the original exploit targeting unpatched QNAP devices" continues Censys. "A majority of these devices were identified running the QNAP QTS Linux kernel version 5.10.60. The new infections do not seem to be targeting a specific organization or country, infections seem to be evenly split between various consumer internet service providers."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/22 Microsoft confirms Lapsus\$ hack
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/microsoft/microsoft-confirms-they-were-hacked-by-lapsus-extortion-group/?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>Microsoft has confirmed that one of their employees was compromised by the Lapsus\$ hacking group, allowing the threat actors to access and steal portions of their source code.</p> <p>Last night, the Lapsus\$ gang released 37GB of source code stolen from Microsoft's Azure DevOps server. The source code is for various internal Microsoft projects, including for Bing, Cortana, and Bing Maps.</p> <p>In a new blog post published tonight, Microsoft has confirmed that one of their employee's accounts was compromised by Lapsus\$, providing limited access to source code repositories.</p> <p>"No customer code or data was involved in the observed activities. Our investigation has found a single account had been compromised, granting limited access. Our cybersecurity response teams quickly engaged to remediate the compromised account and prevent further activity," explained Microsoft in an advisory about the Lapsus\$ threat actors.</p>

"Microsoft does not rely on the secrecy of code as a security measure and viewing source code does not lead to elevation of risk. The tactics DEV-0537 used in this intrusion reflect the tactics and techniques discussed in this blog."

"Our team was already investigating the compromised account based on threat intelligence when the actor publicly disclosed their intrusion. This public disclosure escalated our action allowing our team to intervene and interrupt the actor mid-operation, limiting broader impact."

While Microsoft has not shared how the account was compromised, they provided a general overview of the Lapsus gang's tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) observed across multiple attacks.

Focusing on compromised credentials

Microsoft is tracking the Lapsus\$ data extortion group as 'DEV-0537' and says they primarily focus on obtaining compromised credentials for initial access to corporate networks.

These credentials are obtained using the following methods:

- Deploying the malicious Redline password stealer to obtain passwords and session tokens
- Purchasing credentials and session tokens on criminal underground forums
- Paying employees at targeted organizations (or suppliers/business partners) for access to credentials and multi-factor authentication (MFA) approval
- Searching public code repositories for exposed credentials

Redline password stealer has [become the malware of choice](#) for stealing credentials and is commonly distributed through phishing emails, watering holes, warez sites, and YouTube videos.

Once Lapsus\$ gains access to compromised credentials, they use it to log in to a company's public-facing devices and systems, including VPNs, Virtual Desktop infrastructure, or identity management services, such as Okta, which [they breached in January](#).

Microsoft says they use session replay attacks for accounts that utilize MFA, or continuously trigger MFA notifications until the user becomes tired of them and confirms that the user should be allowed to log in.

Microsoft says that in at least one attack, Lapsus\$ performed a SIM swap attack to gain control of the user's phone numbers and SMS texts to gain access to MFA codes needed to log in to an account.

Once they gain access to a network, the threat actors use [AD Explorer](#) to find accounts with higher privileges and then target development and collaboration platforms, such as SharePoint, Confluence, JIRA, Slack, and Microsoft Teams, where other credentials are stolen.

The hacking group also uses these credentials to gain access to source code repositories on GitLab, GitHub, and Azure DevOps, as we saw with the attack on Microsoft.

"DEV-0537 is also known to exploit vulnerabilities in Confluence, JIRA, and GitLab for privilege escalation," Microsoft explains in their report.

"The group compromised the servers running these applications to get the credentials of a privileged account or run in the context of the said account and dump credentials from there."

The threat actors will then harvest valuable data and exfiltrate it over NordVPN connections to hide their locations while performing destructive attacks on the victims' infrastructure to trigger incident response procedures.

The threat actors then monitor these procedures through the victim's Slack or Microsoft Teams channels.

Protecting against Lapsus\$

	<p>Microsoft recommends that corporate entities perform the following steps to protect against threat actors like Lapsus\$:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen MFA implementation • Require Healthy and Trusted Endpoints • Leverage modern authentication options for VPNs • Strengthen and monitor your cloud security posture • Improve awareness of social engineering attacks • Establish operational security processes in response to DEV-0537 intrusions <p>Lapsus\$ has recently conducted numerous attacks against the enterprise, including those against NVIDIA, Samsung, Vodafone, Ubisoft, Mercado Libre, and now Microsoft.</p> <p>Therefore, it is strongly advised that security and network admins become familiar with the tactics used by this group by reading Microsoft's report.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/22 US checklist to counter Russia cyberattacks
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/white-house-shares-checklist-to-counter-russian-cyberattacks/?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>The White House is urging U.S. organizations to shore up their cybersecurity defenses after new intelligence suggests that Russia is preparing to conduct cyberattacks in the near future.</p> <p>With the U.S. imposing strict sanctions against Russia and aiding Ukraine in the war, the White House is expecting the Kremlin to retaliate with cyberattacks against critical infrastructure and U.S. interests.</p> <p>While Ukraine has been subject to many cyberattacks, there have been no known Russian state-sponsored attacks against the USA since the invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>However, yesterday, the White House and Deputy National Security Advisor Anne Neuberger began urging U.S. companies to increase their cybersecurity defenses after new intelligence indicates Russia is performing "preparatory activity" for potential cyberattacks.</p> <p>"So, we've given a number of threat warnings over the last number of weeks that Russia could consider conducting cyberattacks in response to the very significant economic costs the U.S. and partners have put on Russia in response," Neuberger shared in press briefing yesterday.</p> <p>"This speaks to evolving threat intelligence and a potential shift in intention to do so."</p> <p>Neuberger says that this "preparatory activity" includes typical activity seen before a cyberattack, such as network scanning, vulnerability scanning, and exploring defenses for corporate networks.</p> <p>Neuberger says that the U.S. government had conducted classified briefings with 100 companies last week to share sensitive threat intelligence and information, with many likely private companies operating critical infrastructure.</p> <p>Critical Infrastructure in the USA is a broad range of sixteen different industries, including energy, transportation, communications, healthcare, emergency services, food and agriculture, and information technology.</p> <p>White House releases cybersecurity checklist</p> <p>Yesterday, the White House also released a cybersecurity checklist containing steps organizations should use to shore up their cyber defense.</p> <p>"The U.S. Government will continue our efforts to provide resources and tools to the private sector, including via CISA's Shields-Up campaign and we will do everything in our power to defend the Nation</p>

and respond to cyberattacks," the Biden-Harris administration said in a [cybersecurity fact sheet](#) released yesterday.

"But the reality is that much of the Nation's critical infrastructure is owned and operated by the private sector and the private sector must act to protect the critical services on which all Americans rely."

The list of steps that the White House says all US organizations should apply with urgency are below:

- Mandate the use of multi-factor authentication on your systems to make it harder for attackers to get onto your system;
- Deploy modern security tools on your computers and devices to continuously look for and mitigate threats;
- Check with your cybersecurity professionals to make sure that your systems are patched and protected against all known vulnerabilities, and change passwords across your networks so that previously stolen credentials are useless to malicious actors;
- Back up your data and ensure you have offline backups beyond the reach of malicious actors;
- Run exercises and drill your emergency plans so that you are prepared to respond quickly to minimize the impact of any attack;
- Encrypt your data so it cannot be used if it is stolen;
- Educate your employees to common tactics that attackers will use over email or through websites, and encourage them to report if their computers or phones have shown unusual behavior, such as unusual crashes or operating very slowly; and
- Engage proactively with your local FBI field office or CISA Regional Office to establish relationships in advance of any cyber incidents. Please encourage your IT and Security leadership to visit the websites of [CISA](#) and the [FBI](#) where they will find technical information and other useful resources.

It is important to note that performing these steps will protect your network against cyberattacks of all types, not just those sponsored by Russia, including ransomware and data extortion attempts.

Threat actors commonly collect and [sell stolen login credentials](#) on dark web marketplaces that other threat actors then use to breach corporate networks.

By [utilizing multi-factor authentication](#), an organization can prevent most attacks that use these stolen credentials.

The other typical avenue threat actors use to breach corporate network is [to exploit vulnerabilities](#) in routers, firewalls, and servers exposed to the Internet.

Due to this, it is vital for all organizations, big and small, to apply security updates for their devices as soon as they are released.

Furthermore, organizations should not expose servers to the Internet and instead put them behind a VPN to prevent threat actors from targeting them.

Increasing a network's security posture is not easy and can be expensive. However, the alternative is likely to be far worse if you are forced to restore servers, suffer a data breach, or find that your data is encrypted.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/23 Okta: Lapsus\$ accessed customers' data
SOURCE	https://www.theregister.com/2022/03/23/rere/?&web_view=true
GIST	Identity management as-a-service platform Okta says the Lapsus\$ extortion gang may in fact have managed to see some of its customers' data, and Microsoft has admitted the crew got its grubby paws on some source code.

An updated [post](#) detailing Okta's response to [claims](#) of an intrusion into the service sees chief security officer David Bradbury reveal "a small percentage of customers – approximately 2.5% – have potentially been impacted and whose data may have been viewed or acted upon."

Bradbury has not described the data that may have been viewed, but as Okta's core service is single sign-on for thousands of cloud services, the possibility that customers' credentials have leaked to unknown parties cannot be discounted.

Okta claims to have more than 15,000 customers, so if 2.5 per cent have been compromised that could be 375 organisations that now need to determine if all logons to their preferred clouds – and the actions taken by authenticated users – were legitimate and/or innocuous. Those investigations need to consider sessions since January 16 – the date Okta named in previous statements as the day on which attackers compromised a single laptop used by a support engineer working for one of Okta's suppliers.

A single laptop and 375 customers aren't enormous numbers, but Okta customers like Amazon.com, Apple, Microsoft, NTT, and McKesson employ tens or even hundreds of thousands of people. Those 375 compromised customers could translate to many, many more individual compromises.

Microsoft, thankfully, has [revealed](#) that while Lapsus\$ did indeed manage to see some of its source code – as the gang [claimed](#) earlier this week – just one Microsoft account was compromised, and that one offered "limited access" to source code.

The software giant's post in which that admission was made also offered a detailed description of how Lapsus\$ goes about its nasty business.

Microsoft prefers to refer to the gang as "DEV-0537" and classifies it as "a cybercriminal actor motivated by theft and destruction."

In Microsoft's estimation, the gang uses "phone-based social engineering: SIM-swapping to facilitate account takeover, accessing personal email accounts of employees at target organizations, paying employees, suppliers, or business partners of target organizations for access to credentials and multifactor authentication (MFA) approval; and intruding in the ongoing crisis-communication calls of their targets." Lapsus\$ also advertises for staff and offers to pay insiders who leak credentials or otherwise facilitate attacks.

The gang targets virtual desktop infrastructure and has named Citrix as a vendor whose wares it likes to target. Microsoft's own Azure Active Directory is also on the Lapsus\$ hit list – along with Okta.

The gang does its research and gains what Microsoft described as "intimate knowledge about end-users, team structures, help desks, crisis response workflows, and supply chain relationships" before attacking. Once the raids begin, victims may experience a flood of multifactor authentication (MFA) prompts or calls to the organization's helpdesk to reset a target's credentials. If successful, the gang deploys multiple malware packages – some installed in new VMs it creates on victims' preferred clouds. Another tactic sees Lapsus\$ create a new superadmin in victims' cloud accounts, freezing out legitimate users.

Because Lapsus\$ monitors victims' internal communications, Microsoft recommends development of an out-of-band communication plan for incident responders "that is usable for multiple days while an investigation occurs." The software colossus suggests that be kept somewhere Lapsus\$ will not be able to access – presumably in air-gapped systems or a bottom drawer.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/22 Someone hacked the Spelling Bee
SOURCE	https://gizmodo.com/scripps-national-spelling-bee-website-hacked-1848669629?&web_view=true
GIST	Proving that nothing is sacred, some asshole recently hacked the website for the National Spelling Bee and stole personal information from the site's users.

Gizmodo first spotted that the Bee had been hacked in a mandatory data breach [filing](#) submitted in February to the California Attorney General's Office. According to the notice, a digital intruder used a previously unknown vulnerability to break into [spellingbee.com](#) on Jan. 12, taking the opportunity to steal users' login credentials—both usernames and passwords. The site is largely a resource portal for contestants' parents, sponsors, and teachers.

In an email to Gizmodo, Michael Perry, senior director for external communications at Scripps, revealed that tens of thousands of users' email addresses had been exposed as a result of the hack: "According to public filings, roughly 54,800 email addresses were vulnerable. An undetermined number of those were old and/or inactive," he said. It wasn't immediately clear if the email addresses had been used as usernames, or whether they were stored separately from the stolen login credentials.

After learning of the incident, Scripps hired a digital forensics firm to investigate and also contacted law enforcement. The website was also quickly patched. "We took swift and appropriate action, including disabling passwords. We notified all affected users," Perry said.

Scripps has instructed users to change their passwords—especially those linked to the site that may have also been used for other personal accounts. The Bee offered online sign-ups via its website since as far back as 2008, The Wayback Machine [shows](#).

Not many have reached out to the Bee with concerns about the incident, according to Perry. "The company received a handful of calls or emails after users were notified [of the hack]. We responded to each, and there were no further concerns expressed," he told Gizmodo.

The Scripps National Spelling Bee is the most [well-known contest](#) of its kind in the country, annually bringing together a cadre of children from throughout the U.S. for a friendly competition in location. Last year, Zaila Avant-garde [made history](#) as the first Black American contestant to win by spelling the word "Murraya," a genus of citrus plants.

Hacking America's spelling bee really seems like a kind of moral low point for the digital age. Sure, cybercriminals have exhibited an utter lack of scruples when it comes to harassing and stealing from [schools](#), [churches](#), [hospitals](#), [funeral homes](#), [non-profits](#) and [charities](#)...

...But dear God, the spelling bee? Leave the goddamn spelling bee alone! More than anything it's just further proof that hackers will hack pretty much *anything*. If there's an open door or window, someone is going to climb through it.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/22 Hackers steal \$1.7M NFTs from crypto VC
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/epx7ga/dollar17m-in-nfts-stolen-from-crypto-vc-by-hackers
GIST	<p>On Monday night, Arthur Cheong—the founder of DeFinance Capital, a crypto-centric VC fund—had about \$1.7 million worth of NFTs stolen from his wallet in what appears to have been a social engineering attack.</p> <p>"Well not sure what happened, need to take time to figure it out. Didn't expect this to happen to me as well," Cheong tweeted. "Guess no more hot wallet usage then," he said, referring to crypto wallets that are connected to the internet.</p> <p>"Found out the likely root cause for the exploit, it's a targeted social engineering attack," he tweeted on Tuesday morning. "Received a spear-phishing email that really seems to be sent by one of our portco [portfolio companies] with content that seems like general industry-relevant content."</p> <p>A spear phishing attack is a relatively simple one: To gain access to a system, an attacker sends fake messages that appear legitimate, tailored to a specific target—usually with domain names or other familiar</p>

identifiers so that the target opens a malicious link or file. In this case, the attacker posed as a company that DeFinance Capital had invested in, sharing a document titled "A Huge Risk of Stablecoin (Protected)," Cheong tweeted. After Cheong downloaded the malicious files, they gained access to Cheong's wallet and began stealing tokens and flipping NFTs, [according](#) to blockchain security company PeckShield. Right now, the [hacker's wallet](#) holds some 589 ETH worth about \$1.77 million.

Key to all this was Cheong using a "hot" wallet instead of a "cold" one, meaning a wallet that's connected to the internet as opposed to a hardware one that can keep your seed phrase safe offline. Cheong [shared later](#) that the hacker had access to at least two separate hot wallets but it wasn't exactly clear how.

Later on Tuesday morning, Cheong [said](#) that he would contact people who bought his stolen NFTs after some time. "If you bought my stolen NFT (mainly Azuki and CloneX), appreciate if you can hold it first. I will contact you all when I get my stuff sorted," he tweeted.

One Twitter user named ["Cirrus"](#) claimed to have bought two of the stolen NFTs and said they would return them to Cheong at cost.

Cheong did not respond to Motherboard's request for comment.

This isn't the first attack targeting a crypto-asset investment firms and it likely won't be the last. In January, North Korean hackers [made headlines](#) after impersonating VCs and workers at major crypto firms like Digital Currency Group in order to steal large amounts of crypto from various startups.

Admittedly, it can be difficult to secure one's crypto even if proper steps are taken. Ultimately, all it takes is one mistake to let in a hacker who can drain your wallet permanently, since transactions are irreversible.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/22 Russia largest tech firm too big to fail?
SOURCE	https://www.wired.com/story/yandex-arkady-volozh-russia-largest-tech-company/
GIST	<p>ARKADY YURIEVICH VOLOZH seemed to be in good spirits. It was February 11, his birthday, and the 58-year-old billionaire CEO and cofounder of Yandex, the Russian tech behemoth, was in the sort of open, engaging mood that could be called <i>privetliviy</i>, after the casual Russian word <i>privet</i> for hello. He was speaking from his car in Tel Aviv, bragging about his father—an oil geologist in his eighties who had “discovered” oil in Israel, Volozh said—as we chatted about my upcoming trip to Tel Aviv to interview him for this story.</p> <p>For more than 20 years, Yandex has been known as “Russia’s Google”: It began as a search engine in 1997 and still has a 60 percent share of the Russian search market. But for the past decade, this tag has understated the company’s inescapable ubiquity in Russians’ daily life. Yandex Music is the country’s leader in paid music streaming, and Yandex Taxi is the top ride-hailing app. Millions of Russians use Yandex Navigator, Yandex Market, Yandex News, and Yoo Money (formerly Yandex Wallet) to get around, shop online, read, and spend money.</p> <p>Volozh has only recently begun to make his company less reliant on its Russian business—and on the whims of President Vladimir Putin—by tiptoeing westward. Yandex Taxi formed a joint venture with Uber in 2017, and in 2020 Yandex began testing self-driving cars in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Last year, the Yandex Rover robot, something of a six-wheeled lgloo cooler, began delivering food via a partnership with Grubhub to college campuses in Arizona and Ohio, with plans to expand to 250 American campuses. Yandex had also launched delivery services in London and Paris.</p> <p>On the day of our call, Yandex had a \$16 billion market capitalization on Nasdaq, and about 85 percent of all its shares were traded in the United States.</p> <p>Most of Yandex’s 18,000 employees are still based at the company’s headquarters in Moscow. But Arkady, as everyone at Yandex calls him, Western-style, shorn of the formal Russian patronymic, now more or less lives with his family in Israel. For several years, Israel has been an R&D hub for new</p>

products, [especially in the transport sector](#), which Yandex aimed to bring to markets in Europe, the United States, and the Middle East.

On our call, Volozh asked whether there was anything in particular I wanted to see during my visit—the old city of Jerusalem perhaps? I have seen that, I told him. My goal was to spend as much time as possible with the reigning baron of Russia’s tech sector, and to try out Yandex’s new products firsthand. Yandex had recently [acquired an electric-scooter business](#) in Israel. How about a scooter ride? I asked. Of course, he said.

Volozh had seemed to master the high-wire act that all Russian moguls with global ambitions attempt: to accommodate Kremlin pressure while enticing Kremlin-leery investors and partners in the West. Self-effacing, cerebral, respectful, a soft voice in the boardroom with a salt-and-cinnamon goatee, he “does not come across as a driven entrepreneur,” John Boynton, the American chair of Yandex’s board, told me. In short, he’s the opposite of the stereotypically boastful, political knife-fighting Russian oligarch. “He is more a techie than a business magnate,” says Esther Dyson, an American angel investor and until recently a Yandex board member. In a country that still depends heavily on oil and gas exports, Volozh has been an unyielding visionary for the tech industry, imagining future possibilities—from natural language search to autonomous vehicles—and believing in his beloved Russian “geek community” to build those technologies.

His bent was to keep Yandex out of immediate political matters. But that abruptly became impossible. On the morning of February 24, two days before my flight to Israel, I received a text from a Yandex PR official. “We are deeply sorry,” the person began, but “events, which are beyond our control, create a great deal of uncertainty.” My meeting with Volozh had been postponed, until the “situation allows.”

The situation was that, hours earlier, Putin had launched the military invasion of Ukraine. “Uncertainty” barely described the existential predicament that Volozh, Yandex, and everyone in Russian tech abruptly faced. I received the text shortly before the US stock markets opened; by noon the price of Yandex shares had more than halved. In the following days, Uber announced that its three executives on the board of Yandex Taxi were resigning immediately, and the transport minister of Lithuania asked Google and Apple to remove the taxi app from their platforms.

As the doors to the West were slamming shut, Yandex was imploding at home. On March 1, Lev Gershenzon, the former head of Yandex’s news division, posted an anguished note on Facebook addressed to his former coworkers. “Yandex today is a key element in hiding information about war,” he wrote from his home in Berlin. At “least 30 million Russian users” of Yandex’s [home news page](#) “see that there is no war, there are no thousands of dead Russian soldiers, there are no dozens of civilians killed under Russian bombings.” Gershenzon’s post included a screenshot of Yandex’s homepage that day; there was indeed no sign of carnage. Instead, the lead story highlighted Russian defense minister Sergei Shoigu’s assertion that the main goal of the military’s *spetsoperatsiya* (“special operation”) in Ukraine was to protect Russia from military threats posed by the West. “It’s not too late to stop being accomplices to a terrible crime,” Gershenzon wrote. “If you can’t do anything—quit.”

Gershenzon told me the day after his post that Volozh “is responsible for this news page.” He continued, “It’s the seventh day of the war, and we haven’t seen any statement from him.” The “great entrepreneur, excellent family guy doesn’t understand his responsibility, and the awful thing is that Yandex is participating with—is cooperating with—the Russian army ... It makes me sick.”

As the invasion stretched on, the Russian economy began collapsing under the weight of Western sanctions. On March 3, Yandex [warned](#) that it risked defaulting on \$1.25 billion of debt. In 2020, the tech sector’s weight on the Moscow stock exchange had doubled to 8 percent, close to the European average, and Yandex had been its leading light. Now hundreds of thousands of Russians were fleeing the country, many tech workers among them. Russia’s broader ambitions of being a permanent part of the economies of Europe and North America were also severely chilling. “I believe Yandex’s Russian business is dead, more or less,” Gershenzon told me, since that business is “all based on the ability of the Russian people to spend money.”

It had taken Volozh 20 plus years to demonstrate to the world that world-class technology, as good as anything created in the West, could come out of Russia. Indeed, he stood out as a refutation of the common Western trope, given voice last year by US president Joe Biden, that Russia “[has nuclear weapons and oil wells and nothing else. Nothing else.](#)” I had cited that quote on my call with Volozh, stressing the importance of hearing his story directly from him. But now, as Russia laid siege to its neighbor, his life’s work and aspirations seemed to be crumbling with each passing hour.

II

BORN IN 1964, Volozh was raised primarily in Almaty, the capital of Soviet Kazakhstan. Both his father, the oil geologist, and his mother, a music teacher, were Jewish. In the 1970s, many Soviet Jewish families, faced with persecution, secured exit visas to begin new lives in the West; this was how the family of 6-year-old Sergey Brin, the future cofounder of Google, made it to suburban Maryland.

But Volozh stayed in the Soviet system, attending a special school for gifted students in mathematics. It was there that he formed a close friendship with an equally precocious youngster, Ilya Segalovich. Both headed to Moscow for college in the 1980s—Volozh at an institute of oil and gas and Segalovich at a similar institute for geological prospecting. Volozh graduated with a degree in applied mathematics and, together with Segalovich, began launching a series of small information technology companies.

In the 1990s a newly privatized post-Soviet economy began to take shape, largely ruled by a group of predatory oligarchs. Many had Boris Yeltsin’s Kremlin in their grip, amassing their fortunes through rigged privatization auctions. Volozh and Segalovich, however, were more akin to the founders of a scrappy Silicon Valley startup: tinkering with thought experiments about the possible but unproven commercial potential of the internet.

Starting around 1993, the duo set out to build a digital search program for scientific patents, the Bible, and Russian classical literature. The name, according to the company’s official history, came from Volozh and Segalovich “brainstorming around the words ‘search’ and ‘index.’” They arrived at Яndex, an abbreviation of “yet another indexer,” and soon expanded the software to be able to search the entirety of the Russian internet, [then 5,000 sites and 4 gigabytes of text](#). Their search engine went live in September 1997, “almost a year before Google,” Volozh would proudly point out years later.

As chaotic as Russia’s economy was in the 1990s, there were still plenty of Western investors. In 2000 the private equity firm Baring Vostok, founded by the American businessman Michael Calvey, made a seed capital investment of \$5 million in the young company—enough to secure a 35 percent stake. At the time, Yandex had only \$72,000 in annual revenue and was losing \$2 million a year.

By 2009, Yandex had a 56 percent share of the Russian-language search market, more than double Google’s.

By 2003, the global tech world was well aware of Yandex’s prowess in search, particularly in natural language processing and in calculating the distance between searched keywords. That year, Google founders Brin and Larry Page visited Volozh and Segalovich in Moscow and proposed to buy Yandex for \$100 million. It was a tempting offer, but the pair decided they would rather keep control of their company than effectively become Google employees. When Google later tried to enter the Russian market, Yandex still performed better at capturing the idiosyncrasies of the Russian language, such as the fact that the same word can have many different endings.

By 2009, Yandex had a 56 percent share of the Russian-language search market, more than double Google’s. The Russian economy had stabilized, and ad revenues poured into the company’s coffers.

Yandex quickly expanded into email, maps, online shopping, and the spam blocker Spamooborona. There was a good deal of truth in Volozh’s boast that no other company in the world has competed with Google “and survived and beat it.”

Yandex also grew, in part, by managing not to alienate Vladimir Putin, who became president at the end of 1999. Under Putin's rules, business figures and companies were expected to be loyal to the Kremlin. If not, they had the choice of being arrested and having their assets confiscated or leaving Russia. In one striking example, the oil baron Mikhail Khordorkovsky, then the richest person in Russia, was arrested in 2003 and jailed, and his company, Yukos, was taken over by the state. The reasons remain murky, but they were thought to include his support for opposition politicians and pro-democracy causes.

Volozh and Segalovich, by contrast, largely kept a low profile. Occasionally, they even helped Putin cultivate his everyman image with the Russian public. In 2006, Yandex hosted a live chat with the president, unscripted and televised to the nation. A participant asked Putin, "When did you have sex for the first time?" The president replied, "I don't remember, but I certainly remember the last."

Still, there was room at the margins for dissent, and though Volozh and Segalovich were both politically liberal, they responded differently to the Kremlin's relentless efforts to establish control over Russia's politics. In 2011, Segalovich, but not Volozh, took part in public protests against the results of parliamentary elections that delivered a majority of seats in the Russian Duma to Putin's United Russia party. (The European Court of Human Rights later ruled that [Putin's party had rigged](#) the election.) Some Yandex employees joined Segalovich in the demonstrations. "Ilya was seen as the beating engine of the company, the heart," says Gershenzon, who joined Yandex in 2005. Segalovich, he says, was "charismatic by example" and set the "moral standard" for Yandex. Volozh, by contrast, made "too many compromises" with the Kremlin, Gershenzon says. "When good people have a lot of business with awful people, they start to try to understand them. It's like a disease."

Others see the distinction between the two founders less starkly. "Ilya was not radical," but he "supported the opposition" to Putin, says Alexey Sokirko, a software engineer who worked at Yandex from 2005 to 2018 and attended political rallies with Segalovich. He added, "Arkady within the company contrasted him a little, urging everyone not to politicize Yandex."

"Russia now has a Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak," Loukianoff gushed after Yandex's IPO. But even at the time, this was a reach: In its public-offering prospectus, Yandex explicitly warned that "High-profile businesses in Russia, such as ours, can be particularly vulnerable to politically motivated actions."

Their differences were also in part a function of their roles at the company; Segalovich served as chief technology officer, Volozh as the CEO. As with any Russian CEO of the Putin era, it was Volozh's job to oversee business strategy and to develop personal relationships with officials in and around the Kremlin. (Alexander Voloshin, a former chief of staff to Putin who resigned from the government around the time of the Yukos saga, serves on Yandex's board.) Such relationships proved beneficial when Yandex needed help warding off an anticipated [takeover attempt in 2008 by a metals oligarch](#), Alisher Usmanov, who was looking to expand into tech.

In 2011, Yandex raised \$1.3 billion in a public offering on Nasdaq—then the biggest IPO since Google's. Peter Loukianoff, a Russian-American whose venture capital firm Almaz Capital had been an early investor in Yandex, told *The New York Times* that the moment signaled a [new era "of intellectual wealth creation in Russia"](#)—an era that Volozh and Segalovich had given birth to. "Russia now has a Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak," Loukianoff gushed. But even at the time, his comment was a reach. In its public offering prospectus, Yandex explicitly warned that "high-profile businesses in Russia, such as ours, can be particularly vulnerable to politically motivated actions."

III

ILYA SEGALOVICH WAS diagnosed with stomach cancer in 2012 and died the following year, [at age 48](#), leaving behind his wife and five children. "Ilyusha and I have been friends since school; we sat at the same desk for four years," Volozh wrote on a Yandex page that collected memories of Segalovich. "I don't know what can replace his encyclopedic [knowledge of] technology and clear vision of the product."

Segalovich's death marked the start of a new chapter for Volozh, bereft of his childhood friend and closest business partner, and Yandex, bereft of the man whose "ethical standards," as Volozh wrote, "set the

standard for all of us.” In a 2017 *Moscow Times* op-ed, Russian journalist Elizaveta Osetinskaya wrote of this new phase: “Yandex’s company culture has changed as Russia’s political momentum has gravitated towards conservatism and isolationism.” Putin’s implacable opponent, the anti-corruption activist Alexei Navalny, had complained that Yandex News was hiding reports about his activities from its news feed. Yandex, Osetinskaya wrote, insisted that “its results are automatically generated by algorithms.” (The Navalny movement has long posed a challenge for Yandex. In 2011 the Federal Security Service had required the company to disclose details about financial contributors to Navalny through Yandex’s money service.)

The environment Yandex operated in was also becoming increasingly nationalistic. In 2014, after months of protests in Ukraine forced a pro-Russian president out of office, Putin engineered the annexation of Ukraine’s Crimean Peninsula and stoked a violent separatist movement in the country’s Donbas region. In this darkening climate, dissent from the Kremlin line was more unwelcome than ever.

At a media conference a few weeks after Crimea’s annexation, Putin famously told reporters that the internet was a “CIA project.” He singled out Yandex for being “developed with Western influence” and suggested that its registration in the Netherlands was “not only for tax reasons but for other considerations too.”

Not long after, Sergey Petrenko, the head of Yandex’s operation in Ukraine, the company’s second biggest market, went on “indefinite leave” after posting on Facebook his support for what he called a “purge” of pro-Russian separatists from his home city of Odesa. Petrenko later posted on Facebook that during Russia’s takeover of Crimea he had “called Arkady and said literally ‘This is a war between our countries, we need to do something, we need to go out and say that it can’t be done, we have an audience of millions who need to know this.’” But “nothing happened afterwards.”

To mark the company’s 20th anniversary in 2017, Putin visited Yandex’s Moscow offices, as Volozh’s guest. “I don’t have friction with the state,” [Volozh told Wired UK](#) several months before the visit. “Just like I don’t have friction with the weather.” Ahead of Putin’s arrival, employees were reportedly told not to take bathroom breaks, and the Kremlin recommended they dress casually, to appear “as close to real life as possible,” sources told the Russian outlet *Kolokol* (The Bell). Sokirko, the software engineer, who had publicly vowed to spit on Putin if given the chance, was asked by his supervisors not to come to the office that day. “It’s not all that important,” he wrote on Facebook at the time. “I have a pretty good job.”

Putin’s visit to the Moscow office certainly looked like the bestowal of his blessing on Yandex and its leader. Yet the president remained wary of his country’s largest tech company.

Indeed, despite the Kremlin’s growing presence, as Osetinskaya noted in her *Moscow Times* article, the ambiance at Yandex remained largely congenial: “As is the norm at other leading tech companies, Yandex staff enjoy a free atmosphere of creativity, informal dress code, open-space offices, and hip cafés where employees play video games.”

Putin’s visit, during which he chatted with Alisa, Yandex’s voice assistant, and watched a demo of Yandex’s self-driving technology, certainly looked like the bestowal of his blessing on Yandex and its leader. Yet the president remained wary of his country’s largest tech company.

In 2019, after arduous negotiations with the Kremlin, Yandex put in place a new corporate governance structure. As *The Financial Times* reported, the [Kremlin initially demanded veto power](#) over Yandex’s entire board and control over its Dutch holding company. It ended up settling for two seats on the board and a Kremlin-friendly foundation with a “golden share” in the company that, the *FT* wrote, gave it “the power to block transactions and temporarily remove Yandex’s management if it deems it in the national interest.”

“It was sort of a deal with the devil,” says Esther Dyson, who joined the Yandex board in 2006. (She stressed, though, that Yandex had been transparent throughout the process, and that the company issued a public statement on the restructuring.) Though Volozh rarely so much as hinted at frustration with the

state, he must have found these negotiations unpleasant. One can only speculate whether Segalovich, had he been alive, would have pushed back against the golden share deal. But Segalovich was gone, and Putin's grasp was only tightening.

IV

LEV GERSHENZON LEFT Yandex in 2012, one year after its IPO, using the proceeds from the sale of his stock options to start a tech company in Berlin. He departed in part because he thought that Yandex was overly preoccupied with its business in Russia, at the expense of opportunities abroad. The company, he says, "wasn't ready to aggressively penetrate foreign markets and invest in global expansion."

But though it might not have been fast enough for Gershenzon, change was happening. Volozh had been slowly making Yandex into what he called a "[trans-local company](#)," bringing products proven in Russia into markets where competitors were weak. Yandex set up its first international office in 2005, in Ukraine, and in the following years it expanded into Turkey, Kazakhstan, and Belarus. In 2009, it established its first foothold in America, opening Yandex Labs in Palo Alto, a 10-minute drive from the Googleplex. The idea, in part, was to hire 20 or so engineers who could share with Moscow the latest trends in Silicon Valley.

Like many of his California peers, Volozh more recently got interested in autonomous transportation. In 2018, Yandex launched what it called "the world's first robo-taxi service," in Russia's high-tech city of Innopolis. The 4,000 or so residents of the city could hail one of Yandex's driverless taxis free of charge. "Everything which is easy to automate should be automated," Volozh said in a speech in Armenia the following year.

In an early sign of its designs on the American market, Yandex demonstrated a self-driving vehicle in 2019 at CES, the annual consumer electronics trade show in Las Vegas. And in 2020, the company announced the selection of Ann Arbor as "the perfect testing ground for innovations in transportation," with the city's "wealth of research and engineering facilities and many bright young minds."

Volozh framed his vision of Yandex's global expansion in terms of target metropolises, not nations. For services like taxis, scooters, food delivery, and ecommerce, "you analyze the market by cities," he told an Israeli interviewer last November. For Yandex the key cities were Paris, London, Tel Aviv, and Dubai.

In January, ahead of my expected meeting with Volozh in Tel Aviv, I had lunch in Concord, Massachusetts, with John Boynton, president of the investment firm Firehouse Capital and chair of the Yandex board. He told me he had become interested in the Soviet Union on a trip to Moscow and Leningrad in the early 1980s with his Concord High School classmates. He met Volozh in 1990 and was one of Yandex's first investors. Volozh "operates on a very high plane," says Boynton. And because "Arkady is typically several steps ahead" of everyone else at Yandex, part of Boynton's job has been to "help translate" Volozh's vision into action.

That vision, Boynton was eager to tell me, was rapidly materializing in America and beyond. Press coverage for the Rover robot had been a PR dream. In a local Tucson news segment called "[Ordering the Future](#)," a University of Arizona administrative official gushed about "students taking selfies" with the Rovers and "kind of pet[ting] them as they go on their way." Yandex's fourth generation of autonomous vehicles—Hyundai Sonatas equipped with the company's own software and sensors—were being tested on the streets of Ann Arbor. In the global race for preeminence in self-driving, Yandex was betting on its proprietary lidar sensors, the latest of which, developed to cope with Russia's often frigid, unforgiving driving conditions, could develop a real-time image of the road [up to 550 yards ahead](#). Yango Deli, Yandex's 15-minute delivery app for produce and snacks, was up and running in Paris and London. In November 2021, Yandex had announced a partnership with the Middle Eastern operator for the French global grocery chain Carrefour to make deliveries to Carrefour customers in Dubai using autonomous robots.

This global game plan "was clearly driven by Arkady," Ilya Strebulaev, a professor at Stanford Business School and until recently a Yandex board member, told me.

Perhaps, though, the strategy was belated. Yandex leaders were realizing that the company's growth prospects in Russia were limited. For one thing, Yandex increasingly faced competition in Russia's information economy, not least from government-controlled Sberbank, which is run by German Gref, a Putin associate and a former Yandex board member. Sberbank's major focus is transport, including self-driving cars—exactly the business Yandex was trying so hard to develop. With its government ties, Boynton told me ruefully, Sberbank could draw on more or less unlimited resources; the company was luring talented Yandex workers with offers to triple their pay.

Yandex also faced the perpetual problem of Russia's best young tech minds leaving for jobs in the West. To try to keep them, Yandex had developed its own training and education programs in conjunction with Russian universities, and in Moscow the company paid salaries high enough to compete with Western companies like Google. If a Yandex worker did leave for a job abroad, Boynton told me, Yandex went to considerable effort to understand "exactly why." In Volozh's vision, a Yandex job in Moscow should be on par with a position in Silicon Valley.

V

IN THE FIRST week of the Ukraine invasion, Gershenzon was not the only former or current Yandex employee to denounce the company for "hiding information" about the war. "I celebrate the deafening silence of Yandex. What a blessing that Ilya Segalovich doesn't hear this," wrote Sergey Petrenko, the former head of Yandex Ukraine, in a sarcastic Facebook post on February 28. Three days later, he posted again about his former employer: "All I'm going to say is that among the human vices, I believe cowardice is one of the main ones." When I reached out to Petrenko a few days later, Odesa was under the imminent threat of assault from Russian forces, and I received no response.

In a note announcing his resignation, Ruslan Musaev, a project manager, wrote on Facebook, "I consider the company's actions a crime and complicity in war and murders and I don't want to be a part of it." Sokirko, the former Yandex engineer, told me that probably "90 percent of Yandex employees are against the war." He had been jailed for his participation in antiwar protests in Moscow and then released.

In a note announcing his resignation, Ruslan Musaev, a project manager, wrote on Facebook, "I consider the company's actions a crime and complicity in war and murders and I don't want to be a part of it."

By March 5, ten days into the conflict, there had still been no public word from Volozh. I sent him an email. It was a Saturday in Israel. "Shabbat Shalom," I greeted him. "I cannot begin to imagine the circumstances you now face. I am reaching out now in hopes of engaging in a conversation."

The questions I planned to ask him were obvious enough. Why was he maintaining a public silence? How did he respond to Musaev's post branding the company complicit in "wars and murders?" Had he communicated his views on the war to anyone in the Kremlin? What was Yandex's future in Russia and beyond?

I imagined him frantically working through the night with his team in Moscow to keep Yandex from collapsing. Just six days into the war, *Forbes* reported, the market capitalization of Yandex had plunged from its November 2021 peak of \$30 billion to below \$7 billion, while Volozh's net worth, recently as high as \$2.6 billion, was down to \$580 million. (Nasdaq has halted trading in Yandex shares since February 28.)

Meanwhile, Western partners were continuing to undo ties with the company. Grubhub terminated its partnership with Yandex. The future of the self-driving research operation in Ann Arbor was uncertain. DuckDuckGo, the [privacy-focused search engine](#) that had sourced its results in part from Yandex's index, [paused its partnership](#) with the company. In the UK, a spokesperson for the Liberal Democratic party compared Yandex to Huawei in China and said "any company that is in any way propping up the Putin regime is potentially on the sanctions list."

Then Dyson and Strebulaev [resigned from the board](#), releasing a joint statement: “In the current political environment in Russia, it has become impossible for the team to continue to provide a free and open platform for information for the Russian public without breaking the law and putting the company and its employees at risk.”

While Volozh remained silent, Yandex’s Moscow-based executive director, Tigran Khudaverdyan, who had been Volozh’s number two since 2019, assumed the role of the company’s voice. “What is happening is unbearable,” he wrote on March 2 [in a Facebook post](#). “War is a monstrous thing. Today, many people are demanding that the company immediately get up on top of an armored car and loudly state its position. I believe that any actions we take should be dictated not by emotional impulses, but by key priorities.” The two most important ones, he said, were “employees’ safety” and “keeping key services for Yandex users operational.” Services like search, taxis, and food delivery, he argued, were “as essential” to Russians “as electricity and water supply.” (On March 4, the Russian government blocked Russians’ access to both Facebook and Twitter, and passed a law that criminalized the use of words like “war” and “invasion” to describe its attack on Ukraine.)

Still, the company strived for normalcy. When I talked to Boynton on the phone on March 8, he told me that “everyone is coping” as best they can at Yandex. A Moscow source in a position to know told me the company was planning a “big party” for its workers in celebration of International Women’s Day on March 8, always a major festivity in Russia.

And while the US and European governments were sanctioning other Russian business figures with Kremlin ties, Yandex executives were seemingly spared—that is, until March 15, when the EU slapped an asset freeze and travel ban on Khudaverdyan. The [EU’s official journal](#) cited Gershenzon’s post about Yandex “hiding information” and revealed that on February 24, the day Russia invaded Ukraine, the Yandex deputy CEO and other Russian business leaders had met with Putin at the Kremlin to discuss an action plan in the wake of Western sanctions. Khudaverdyan resigned immediately.

VI

WITH THE RUSSIAN economy in shreds and Putin rapidly closing anything left of a free internet, the tech-worker brain drain was becoming a frantic mass exodus. Thousands of those who could afford to were fleeing a country that was “[flying into an abyss](#),” as one Russian tech executive told *The Financial Times*, escaping to Cyprus, Armenia, and beyond. Some 25,000 Russians had reportedly arrived in Georgia within the first two weeks of the invasion. For the many more left behind, including untold thousands of Yandex workers, there’s the very real prospect that the Russian economy and tech sector will be isolated for years or decades, leaving them without a livelihood.

One conceivable way for Yandex to protect and retain at least some of its workers might be to bring them from Moscow to Israel. The country has a bustling tech industry, and it does not appear to want to restrict Yandex’s business activities there. Israel might also be a base for Yandex’s bid to deepen its presence in the United Arab Emirates, with which Israel has friendly relations and which has so far not imposed sanctions on Russia. The Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* [reported that](#) Yandex had approached the government about bringing over 800 workers, but an Israeli foreign ministry spokesperson told me, “it seems no such requests were submitted by the company.”

Volozh could have joined the brain exodus from the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia and tried to make his fortune in the West. Instead he made his fortune in Russia, and he now stands to lose a big portion of it there.

The company could still stabilize in an increasingly isolated Russia, even if its global ambitions are dashed. With Apple Pay now shut off to some Russian customers, Yandex Pay could gain market share, and the same might go for other services where Yandex no longer faces foreign competition. A Chinese buyer might make an offer for parts of the company or even all of it. Alternatively, a Kremlin-controlled firm like Sberbank could take it over, a fulfillment of the Kremlin’s apparent designs on Yandex as, in effect, a national-security property. Yandex perhaps will sell Yandex News to a Kremlin-friendly Russian buyer: There are reportedly talks of a sale to the social network VKontakte. More ominous still, Russian

officials might stage a trumped-up case on tax fraud or the like against the company, as they did against Khodorkovsky and Yukos years ago, and then insist on the forfeiture of Yandex's assets to the state.

On March 11, I heard from Yandex that Volozh, who'd been silent for 16 days, wanted to talk. A spokesperson arranged for a Zoom call with him that day. Twelve minutes before the call was supposed to begin, the spokesperson texted me that she'd have to postpone the meeting. "Something urgent has come up," she said, without elaborating. There has been no word since.

I spoke with Strebulaev a few days after he resigned from the board, and I asked whether he thought it was all over for the company. "I don't know," he replied. But Volozh, two years shy of 60, could move on with a new venture, he said. "If Arkady decides to do something else, maybe in Israel," Strebulaev told me, "I think he is going to be successful. People love him. People believe in him," and "people will follow." He reflected on his first meeting with Volozh, over a two-hour lunch in London in 2018, the conversation spilling over into Volozh's avid interest in Israeli archaeology. Volozh is "always teeming with ideas," Strebulaev said. "He kind of lives in the future."

Volozh reportedly has a Maltese passport and an Israeli one; it's now likely he will live the rest of his years outside of Russia. Still, his career and even his life might be framed as "the one who stayed behind." He could have joined the brain exodus from the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia and tried to make his fortune in the West. Instead he made one in Russia, and he now stands to lose a big portion of it there. The duality he tried for so long to maintain, as both Russian and Western, has collapsed—always the risk in the implicit bargain he made with Putin's Kremlin.

As to whether his apparent passivity in the face of the war in Ukraine amounts to a moral stain on his reputation, history and his own conscience will judge. It is tempting, though, to offer him the sort of line from Russian classical literature that the Yandex search engine was invented to find. "*Shtob umno postupat', odnovo uma—malo*," Dostoevsky wrote in *Crime and Punishment*: "It takes more than just intelligence to act intelligently."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/22 FBI warns energy sector on Russia activity
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/russia-cyberattacks-us-energy-fbi-warning/
GIST	<p>The FBI has warned the U.S. energy sector about "network scanning activity" stemming from multiple Russia-based IP addresses. The activity is believed to be associated with cyber actors "who previously conducted destructive cyber activity against foreign critical infrastructure."</p> <p>The FBI bulletin, issued March 18 and obtained by CBS News, was released just days before President Biden announced Monday that "evolving intelligence" suggests Russia is exploring options for potential cyberattacks targeting the U.S. homeland.</p> <p>Federal law enforcement revealed that activity of Russian IP addresses "likely indicates early stages of reconnaissance, scanning networks for vulnerabilities for use in potential future intrusions."</p> <p>The FBI has identified 140 overlapping IP addresses linked to "abnormal scanning" activity of at least five U.S. energy companies, as well as at least 18 other U.S. companies spanning the defense industrial base, financial services, and information technology.</p> <p>However, the focus appears to be on entities within the energy sector, according to the FBI assessment. "US Energy Sector entities are advised to examine current network traffic for these IP addresses and conduct follow-on investigations if observed," the alert reads.</p> <p>According to the FBI, IP addresses identified by law enforcement began scanning U.S. critical infrastructure as early as March 2021.</p> <p>"This scanning activity has increased since the start of the Russia/Ukraine conflict, leading to a greater possibility of future intrusions," the bulletin notes. "While the FBI recognizes that scanning activity is</p>

common on a network, these reported IPs have been previously identified as conducting activity in conjunction with active exploitation of a foreign victim, which resulted in destruction of the victim's systems."

The bureau says that while these IPs cannot be directly correlated to successful exploitation, the FBI is providing indicators of compromise "out of an abundance of caution."

FBI Director Christopher Wray said Tuesday that concern about malicious cyber activity is the product of "specific investigative work and surveillance work that we've been doing all together." He added, "Most cyberattacks don't just happen in an instant. There's activity that leads up to it. There's scanning and researching, researching of victims. Scanning for vulnerabilities in systems. There's developing access to those systems. There's a whole range of preparatory work, which is what we've been seeing."

According to the FBI, the number of ransomware incidents reported to the U.S. government increased by 82% from 2019 to 2021. Since the bureau opened its investigation into Russia-based REvil hackers in August 2018, cybercriminals have attacked more than 40,000 U.S.-based victims and received over \$150 million in ransoms through virtual currency systems.

But some U.S. cybersecurity firms have alleged discrepancies in the FBI memo, noting that many of the IP addresses listed do not exhibit targeted behavior, while others are not geo-located in Russia.

"Some have scanned internet hosts which have no connection to critical infrastructure," Sergio Caltagirone, a former NSA cyber-defense expert and director of threat intelligence at cybersecurity firm Dragos, told CBS News. "Therefore, the targeted premise which supposedly underpins this list is questionable."

Caltagirone added that cybersecurity firms have "precious few network defense resources" to draw upon to protect industrial infrastructure. "Tasking them with tracking 140 scanning IP addresses with no additional context will take them away from doing more valuable network defense activities," he said.

Anne Neuberger, Mr. Biden's deputy national security adviser for cyber and emerging technology, told reporters Monday that U.S. officials have observed "preparatory work" linked to nation-state actors. Such activity could indicate increased levels of scanning websites and hunting for vulnerabilities among U.S. companies.

Since February 15, the Ukrainian government said it has suffered over 3,000 DDoS or "distributed denial of service attacks," that have barraged government websites with traffic, rendering them unusable. But cyber attacks launched by Russia since the start of the Ukrainian invasion have created relatively minimal damage compared with the shelling of cities and civilian casualties brought about by kinetic warfare.

Last week, engineers linked Ukraine to an electricity grid connected to much of continental Europe, allowing the country to remove its power system from its Russian adversary, officials announced. A pair of Russian-linked cyber attacks in 2015 and 2016 knocked power out in parts of Ukraine.

U.S. lawmakers and cybersecurity experts have long warned of the Kremlin using its Ukrainian neighbor as a "testing ground" for powerful cyber weapons.

The urgent memo to private sector owners and operators comes just days before the president is set to travel to Brussels Thursday for a NATO summit before heading to Poland.

"The magnitude of Russia's cyber capacity is fairly consequential," Mr. Biden said Monday, addressing the Business Roundtable, an association of some of the nation's largest corporations. "And it's coming."

The FBI does not comment on specific intelligence products as standard practice, a spokesperson noted.

	<p>"The FBI routinely shares information with law enforcement and industry partners in order to protect the communities they serve and work with. The FBI always encourages members of the public and private industry to be vigilant and report anything they consider suspicious to law enforcement," the spokesperson added.</p> <p>The Department of Energy told CBS News in a statement that it "remains fully engaged with our industry and government partners."</p> <p>"We continue to hold regular threat briefings, share intelligence and actionable information with our energy sector partners, and encourage them to strengthen their cybersecurity posture and remain vigilant," the Department of Energy Spokesperson said.</p>
Return to Top	

Terror Conditions

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	03/23 Taliban block education for girls
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/afghanistan-education-kabul-taliban-dcdc0ba6768213009f69cc6e284d7f52
GIST	<p>KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Afghanistan's Taliban rulers decided against opening schools to girls above the sixth grade, reneging on a previous promise and opting to appease their hardline base at the expense of further alienating the international community.</p> <p>The unexpected decision, confirmed by a Taliban official Wednesday, came at the start of the new school year in Afghanistan. It is bound to disrupt Taliban efforts to win recognition from potential international donors, at a time when the country is mired in a worsening humanitarian crisis.</p> <p>The international community has been urging Taliban leaders to open schools and give women their right to public space. A statement by the ministry earlier in the week urged "all students" to come to school.</p> <p>The decision to postpone a return of girls going to school in higher levels appeared to be a concession to the rural and deeply tribal backbone of the hardline Taliban movement, that in many parts of the countryside are reluctant to send their daughters to school.</p> <p>The decision to cancel the return of girls to school came late in the night on Tuesday, Waheedullah Hashmi, external relations and donor representative with the Taliban-led administration, told The Associated Press.</p> <p>"It was late last night that we received word from our leadership that schools will stay closed for girls," said Hashmi. "We don't say they will be closed forever."</p> <p>The surprise decision also comes as the movement's leadership has been summoned to southern Kandahar by the reclusive Taliban leader, Haibatullah Akhunzada, amid reports of a Cabinet shakeup, according to an Afghan leader who is also a member of the leadership council. He spoke on condition of anonymity, because he was not authorized to speak to the media. He said it is possible some of the senior interim Cabinet positions could be changed.</p> <p>There have been persistent reports since the Taliban swept to power in August of differences among the senior leadership, with the more hardline among the movement at odds with the pragmatists among them. The pragmatists reportedly want to see a greater engagement with the world and while staying true to their Islamic beliefs be less harsh than when they last ruled Afghanistan, banning women from work and girls from schools.</p> <p>Television is allowed in Afghanistan today, unlike in the past and women are not required to wear the all encompassing burqa. but must wear the traditional hijab, covering their heads. Women have also returned</p>

to work in the health and education ministry and at Kabul International Airport at passport control and custom.

The Taliban were ousted in 2001 by a U.S.-led coalition for harboring al Qaida leader Osama bin Laden and returned to power after America's chaotic departure last August..

Girls have been banned from school beyond Grade 6 in most of the country since the Taliban's return. Universities opened up earlier this year in much of the country, but since taking power the Taliban edicts have been erratic and while a handful of provinces continued to provide education to all, most provinces closed educational institutions for girls and women.

In the capital Kabul private schools and universities have operated uninterrupted.

The religiously-driven Taliban administration fears going forward with enrolling girls beyond Grade 6 could alienate their rural base, said Hashmi.

"The leadership hasn't decided when or how they will allow girls to return to school," Hashmi said. While he accepted that urban centers are mostly supportive of girls education, much of rural Afghanistan is opposed, particularly in tribal Pashtun regions.

In some rural areas a brother will disown a brother in the city if he finds out that he is letting his daughters go to school," said Hashimi, who said the Taliban leadership is trying to decide how to open education for girls beyond Grade 6 countrywide.

Most Taliban are ethnic Pashtuns. In their sweep through the country last year, other ethnics groups such as Uzbeks and Tajiks in the north of the country either joined the fight to give the Taliban their victory or simply chose not to fight.

"We did everything the Taliban asked in terms of Islamic dress and they promised that girls could go to school and now they have broken their promise," said Mariam Naheebi, a local journalist who spoke to the Associated Press in the Afghan capital. Naheebi has protested for women's rights and says "they have not been honest with us."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/22 Terrorist 'acted in line with ISIS manuals'
SOURCE	https://www.jns.org/beersheva-terrorist-appeared-to-have-acted-in-line-with-isis-manuals/
GIST	<p>(March 22, 2022 / JNS) Muhammad Abu Al-Kiyan, an Israeli man in his mid-30s from the Bedouin town of Houra who murdered four Israelis in a combined car-ramming and knife-stabbing attack in Beersheva on Tuesday, appeared to have acted in line with instructions found in ISIS attack manuals, a senior terrorism expert has told JNS.</p> <p>Al-Kiyan first ran over a cyclist and then stabbed to death a gas-station employee, as well as two women and a man, in the worst terror attack Israel has seen in recent years. Police said he appeared to have acted alone.</p> <p>The terrorist was shot dead by an Israeli bus driver and a second civilian on the scene, video footage posted on social media showed.</p> <p>"In principle, his activity is similar to ISIS. In its manuals, ISIS calls for 'lone-wolf' attackers to use vehicles for ramming attacks, and when these can't drive any further, to stop and use sharp knives for stabbings," explained Michael Barak, a senior researcher at the Institute for Counter-Terrorism in Herzliya who teaches courses on terrorism and Islamic radical movements.</p> <p>According to ISIS manuals, "this creates maximum carnage. This attack is very similar to what ISIS preaches in its manuals. He may have been exposed to this propaganda," he added.</p>

According to Ynet, in 2016, Abu Al-Kiyan, a former middle-school physical-fitness teacher in Hora, was sentenced to four years in prison for setting up an ISIS cell, in which he served as a spiritual mentor. He took part in meetings of ISIS supporters and was charged with incitement to terrorism.

He was also convicted of trying to reach Syria to join ISIS with fellow ISIS supporters in 2015.

Southern District Prosecutors asked for a severe sentence at his trial, but the presiding judge at the time said the defendant regretted his actions in a way that “looks honest.” The four-year sentence was the result of a plea bargain.

Abu Al-Kiyan reportedly acted frequently as a mosque preacher in Houra. Between 2013 and 2015, he met with ISIS supporters near the mosque, and his followers included a man who ended up joining ISIS in Syria and being killed in battle there. Abu Al-Kiyan and other plotters planned to travel to Saudi Arabia, and then make contact with people who could get them into Syria, according to the trial material. They even turned to Twitter for help in this scheme.

Barak said Israeli authorities had erred by not monitoring Abu Al-Kiyan after his release, saying that a mechanism is needed to ensure former ISIS prisoners do not harbor murderous intentions, as occurs in the West.

Barak warned that the attack, coming close as it does to the Muslim holiday of Ramadan and to Land Day on March 30, could help make explosive dates even more attractive to future attackers. The Israel Police says it is on alert for copycat terrorists.

Maj. (res.) Tal Beeri, head of the research department at the Alma Center, which monitors security threats, said that the “situation that has been created following the attack in Beersheva forms fertile ground for a campaign of incitement and influence on the part of Iranians and Hezbollah on social media among Jewish public opinion on the one hand, and Arab public opinion on the other in Israel.”

He said the conditions are similar to the lead-up to the last May’s 11-day conflict between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. “The goal: creating disquiet and division in the fabric of life in Israel,” he cautioned.

‘Hamas is strumming on these strings’

Barak said the violence in Beersheva contributes to existing tensions and to Hamas’s ongoing incitement campaign that is raging on social media and its own media.

“Hamas has been threatening to escalate, like it did last year, claiming that Israel ‘seizes homes from Arabs in Jerusalem, the Negev and the Galilee. Hamas is again threatening to set fire to the ground,” said Barak.

He also called attention to the appearance of a “Jewish militia in the Beersheva area set up to safeguard local civilians. There are Islamist elements presenting this as a plot against Arabs and part of an effort to conquer Islamic lands. This also adds to the fire. Hamas is strumming on these strings,” he said.

In recent weeks, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other Palestinian factions announced the launch of a new “mechanism” designed to coordinate between themselves and Arab Israelis.

While the efficiency of this channel is far from clear, it does show that Hamas is trying to level a “psychological weapon against Israel, warning it that if it continues to ‘harm’ Arab Israelis, Hamas will respond,” explained Barak. “This is a lesson from the May conflict. Hamas wants to recruit Arab Israelis. It is trying to tell Arab Israelis: ‘You have an address. We will deal with Israel.’ This is influencing the entire atmosphere.”

HEADLINE	03/23 Al-Shabab attacks Somalia capital airport
SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2022-03-23/al-shabab-gunmen-attack-airport-in-somalias-capital
GIST	<p>MOGADISHU, Somalia (AP) — Gunfire rang out in Somalia's capital Wednesday as Islamic extremists attacked the international airport, injuring at least three police officers.</p> <p>Somali security forces repulsed the assault, killing two armed attackers, Somali Police Commissioner Gen. Abdi Hassan Hajar told the Somali National News Agency.</p> <p>The attackers, armed with pistols and grenades, were “pretending” to be airport workers when they launched the attack, he said.</p> <p>The two gunmen attempted to force their way into a military base within the airport but were thwarted, Somali police spokesman Maj. Abdifitah Adan told state media. Three police personnel were injured, he said.</p> <p>Al-Shabab, Somalia's Islamic extremist rebels, claimed responsibility for the attack inside Mogadishu's Aden Abdulle International Airport, saying its fighters were attempting to invade a compound that is home to several diplomatic missions.</p> <p>A heavy cloud of black smoke rose into the sky after a stray bullet hit a fuel tank near a checkpoint where al-Shabab fighters exchanged fire with security personnel, eyewitness Awil Abdi told AP.</p> <p>All domestic and international flights had been suspended due to the attack, said a statement from airport authorities.</p> <p>Al-Shabab frequently stages deadly attacks in Mogadishu and other parts of Somalia. The rebels are fighting to impose strict Shariah law in Somalia and oppose the federal government in Mogadishu and the presence of foreign peacekeepers in the Horn of Africa nation.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/22 Social media fuels fundraising ISIS camps
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/breaking-the-walls-the-threat-of-isis-resurgence-as-social-media-fuels-fundraising-in-isis-womens-camps/
GIST	<p>Syria's North Eastern province of Al Hasakah, where 10,000 alleged ISIS members have been imprisoned, has witnessed disturbing developments in the past month. On Jan. 20, around 100 ISIS members employing suicide vests and car bombs overran the al Sina prison in southern Hasakah, which housed thousands of the ISIS militants. The attack, following ISIS's long-held strategy of “Breaking the Walls” to attack prisons in order to free like-minded jihadists and revive their ranks, as was carried out by al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) in Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq in July 2013, was intended to free their incarcerated comrades. It involved using a bomb-filled truck in a suicide mission and was also the second such plot – an identical first one had been thwarted weeks before, meaning ISIS had multiple vectors and cells for carrying out this attack and it was a crucial effort for them.</p> <p>To sow chaos during the attack, the inmates who had prior knowledge of these attacks instigated timely prison riots, killing guards, taking the young boys held in another part of the complex hostage and later storming out of the prisons. This brazen prison assault, seen as the most sophisticated complex attack launched by the group in the past three years, raged a bloody 9-day battle between the ISIS sleeper cells and the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, also drawing in the U.S. air coalition that carried out initial airstrikes in support of their local allies. On Jan. 30, by the time the operation ended, a great deal of damage had already been done alongside the valiant deaths of 140 SDF forces and prison guards and dozens of ISIS members killed. Scores of ISIS prisoners which may be in the hundreds escaped, amongst them 20 high-profile ISIS militants, who are reportedly being smuggled into the central Syrian desert, the safe haven of the ISIS insurgency. The SDF administration followed by revamping its security and surveillance architecture and has undertaken aggressive combing operations across Al Hasakah to hunt down escaped ISIS fugitives and has launched rigorous military operations and major search raids in the</p>

neighborhood provinces of Deir Ezzor and Raqqa [that led to the arrest of a major ISIS financier who was responsible for transferring money in Al Hol camp to ISIS sleeper cells.](#)

While all these events have gained enough media traction, what has been paid less attention was how the SDF administration – highly alarmed by this prison break – overhauled [its security vigilance in the camps, particularly Al Hol, and undertook](#) various security crackdowns for the fear of further infiltration of ISIS cells inside the camps that can again trigger a cycle of dangerous killings, also raising the dangerous prospect of further escapes of the ISIS women who ostensibly came in contact with the escaped ISIS militants and prisoners. The monitoring of social media discourse from inside the camps reveals how the SDF embraced a tight security regime that they hadn't implemented in the recent years to stall any further violence. As a consequence ISIS-linked women from the camps in Al Hol started reflecting the impact of the tightened security measures. They reported via social media increased search raids, accusing the guards of stealing their valuable belongings, sweeping investigations in the tents, closure of markets, added fortifications and additional troop deployment coupled with the prohibition of entry and exit to everyone except the medical workers.

Thus we see now in monitoring social media from the camps that the recent notorious ISIS attack has changed the security dynamics in the camps and that the recent crowdfunding efforts have shifted their focus to openly rallying for freeing the prisoners including men, women and children. This article aims to open a window to the social media discourse of ISIS adherents and discuss the repercussions it may have for the region.

Social Media Updates from the Camps

While one can never be certain one is observing posts from inside the camp, those who observe such postings get to know the “signature” of many posters. Yet this study takes on face value that women who claim to be inside the camps actually are. To follow ICSVE's ethics on internet research the first author, who collected this data, did not question the women and records only publicly posted comments after removing all identifying information. Below is a compilation of some of those posts.

In regard to a recent claimed statement that niqabs, which make it impossible for the Kurds to know who has done what, are no longer being tolerated in the camps, a Russian woman from Al Hol wrote, “Recently, namely, starting from the 20th of January, after the fights for freedom between the Kurds and the prisoners of the Guveyran prison in Hasakah began, we are also not calm!!! Kurdish najas [ritually unclean], not only forced us to take off our niqabs, they delivered an ultimatum ‘If you want to get to the market, or to the hospital, take off your niqabs.’ – this is the plan. So ever since then, every night, and sometimes even during the day, they just calmly do not let you get the phone – they go around, snooping around. There were even cases when men entered the tent at night, when the sisters were sleeping, Subhanallah 1, waking up, they found their eyes on themselves .. They also began to take money and gold jewellery. May Allah protect us all from their evil Allah!u Akbar, Yesterday, a pickup truck was also seen, which drove into their office, in the back was full of weapons ..And just a couple of hours ago, they said that there would be a big raid.”

The updates about the evolving on-ground developments were also circulated by admins of the various ISIS-linked online crowdfunding networks on social media. They initiated an awareness campaign about the deteriorating security conditions in the camps to mobilize more support and raise funds for the daily sustenance of these women. One admin on the Russian Telegram group asked the Muslims to make dua (prayer) for women and showed how the “sisters” were so resilient and patient not complaining about the difficult living conditions they live in, but instead worried about the condition and well-being of ISIS fighters, their brothers, when they were valiantly fighting against the “Kurdish dogs”. He writes, “Do not forget to make dua for the children and sisters who are already 9 days without a market. These dogs cordoned off everything and did not allow anyone to call in, except for the cleaners and bread (Syrian). Do not forget to make dua so that Allah will ease this situation for them. The sisters themselves do not complain, just the children of subhanallah are worried about the situation of the brothers”

As the Defeat ISIS Coalition continues to work together to control the situation, Apache helicopters hover over the camps to monitor suspicious activities and the Kurdish internal security forces began digging

earth mounds as an added layer of defense and closing the main gates of the camp to stall any escapes, panic and fear engulfed the tents and the group chats of the women started teeming with messages of warnings about the raids and investigations that were carried in the tents to further inform and alert other women so that they could hide their prized possessions and belongings, the most important being their mobile phones which are the only source of communication and entertainment with the outside – for the possession of which women could land up in prisons. The social media landscape from Al Hol with the photos of newly imposed barriers, newly installed security cameras, distressed scenes of people scrambling to escape from the accidental fires, closure of markets – that has now led to the increase in the supply of food prices alluding to how their living conditions have deteriorated following the battle between the ISIS and the Kurdish fighters at Ghweiran.

In the sea of the opinions of hundreds of women in the camp, the social media landscape in channels where ISIS women in the camps tend to post is dominated by the voices of those who vociferously continue to be loyal and offer moral support to the group when the “mujahideen” were embroiled in the skirmishes with the SDF following the ISIS-laid siege of the Ghweiran prison. With the ISIS militants having an upper hand in the initial days of battle when they held minors hostage inside the prison, the stream of various congratulatory messages with the hashtag **#Ghewiranbreakingtheprisonwalls** started pouring from different corners of the world stretching from India to Netherlands on the ISIS “ansar” channels, out of which many were ostensibly from Al Hol camp posted in order to glorify ISIS’s prison assault. A written message in calligraphic font written discreetly from the tents of Al Hol read **“From Al Hol camp, we congratulate our brothers who were released from Ghweran prison. We are waiting for you!”** An ISIS adherent using an ISIS kunya on her Facebook profile desperate for her release through her post turned hopeful that after Ghweiran the next destination for ISIS fighters is Al Hol, alluding that the militants would next overrun the Al Hol detention center: **“The boom sounds faint, the area is Sham and the sound echoes between AL HawL and Sijn Ghuwiron, a distance of 60 km or an hour’s journey Bi’idznillaah [by the Glory of Allah’s religion,] Next [destination]Alhol AL HawL- Help the Mujahideen with Your Best Prayers Ya Ikhwah Fillah [Oh Brothers in Allah].”**

The communication wasn’t just from one side. Many ISIS prisoners during the clashes with the SDF forces as substantiated by the claims of women from the camps show that they were able to establish communication with them back within their camps. Updating them about their condition in the prisons, the ISIS fighters holding out in the prison acknowledged that there were scores of wounded militants who needed urgent medical attention and also insisted that they (the women) need to be “prepared” because fighters who were able to escape to raise the banner of the black ISIS flag could soon storm Al Hol camp to free them as well. According to ICSVE interviews in Al Hol, Al Roj and the now-closed Ain Issa camps, this has been the horrific fear of those women who no longer support ISIS – that their fighters could come reclaim them from the camps, against their will. But for the ISIS diehards, it’s what they’ve been wishing for and preaching about for their months and years of captivity. A Turkish brother who managed to escape contacted his mother to tell her there was bombardment and armed attacks and also told how the male ISIS prisoners escaped from building to building. Another message from the female camps talked about the men contacting from inside the siege. It reads, **“Many brothers have called their wives, the situation is difficult, some have not eaten for ten days. Everyone here accepts good news, also we were told be prepared maybe our camp will be stormed too and to stick in our tents in case of shootings.”** The escaped ISIS men also instructed their relatives back in the camps to steer clear of participating in the pro-ISIS demonstrations chanting “Takhbhir, Allahu Akbar” [Let’s say Allah is the Greatest!] as this would bring them under the immediate radar of Asayish (internal security forces) that would inhibit their further mutual communication. For the “steadfastness” of the “mujahideen,” that in their eyes could pave the victory over “infidels,” the ISIS fighters from inside the prison circulated instructions for their wives **“to fast for 3 days in a row, do a lot of tauba [repentance], and ask Allah to hide them from the damned kuffar [unbelievers].”** This reflects their belief that fasting alongside praying would reinvigorate the fighting spirit of these fighters and yield greater chances of their win over “kuffars”.

While some pro-Islamic State women were flirting with the elusive idea of their husbands freeing them from prisons, some also realized that if ISIS militants in such debilitating security conditions would mount

any attack or infiltrate the detention camp, there lingers a pervading threat of them getting caught after escaping from the camps. They claimed that the strategy of extricating them from the camps could prove detrimental at a time when even the freed ISIS militants in the prevailing hostile security condition would be clamoring to find safe havens in Al Hasakah and neighboring provinces where the SDF has been on high alert undertaking sweeping combing operations against the ISIS sleeper cells. On the other hand in Al Roj, some women dressed their kids as "mujahideen" posing with knives to jubilantly celebrate the ISIS attack on the Al Sina Prison proving their loyalty for the group. While ISIS-related social media was replete with solidarity congratulatory messages for the ISIS fighters who overran the Al Sina prison, other discussions revolved around advising the sisters as ISIS also did in the past, not to consume the news from the "kufr media" which they claim are only rumors and lies, and discussing which prisoners might have made their way out and anticipating the death of Kurdish-led SDF fighters by the increasing Turkish-backed SNA attacks and drone attacks from Turkey inside SDF-held territories. The rumors that were being [peddled included that Al Salama – who was the Al Baraka Wali](#) and the security chief of Al Shadadi district in Al Hasakah before the fall of ISIS – had been able to escape from the prison. Al Salama is an important figure in that he headed sleeper cells after the territorial defeat of ISIS to carry out attacks in Rojava and facilitated the process of transferring ISIS militants from Deir Ezzor to Turkey and also oversaw IS weapon smuggling and financial operations from the chaos of ensuing clashes. If true, the escape of such high-ranking IS members who are familiar with the local terrain would certainly add fuel to the group's resurgence.

The discussions are a testament that validates the claims of constant communication between the ISIS prisoners and the fugitives with their families back in the detention facilities of Al Hol and other camps in which they were updating their relatives about the on-ground developments. The coordinated prison assault with the incarcerated members also is a testament to the determination of ISIS to repeat its "Breaking the Walls" campaign that worked so well for them when they were still AQI in Iraq. It is also a testament to the grave intelligence and surveillance failure and longstanding loopholes that the SDF security apparatus, facing threats from all sides, reels from while overseeing these detention facilities. Their lack is largely owing to a lack of infrastructural support from the international community in overseeing these facilities, many countries who have also repetitively refused to repatriate IS fighters and their family members, leaving the SDF and AANES government to fend for themselves to secure these detention centers. Monitoring of social media discourse of the women from the camps lends credence to the argument and reinforces suspicions that phones were being smuggled in the highly fortified Al Sina detention center and the incarcerated fighters had access to communication devices through usually underpaid prison guards who might have allowed the prison inmates to [use their phones in exchange for bribes](#). This same dynamic can be seen for the women in the camps in even larger proportions. [Smuggling of cell phones](#) through employees and shop owners is also a prevalent problem in the camps and, per the accounts of European women from Al Roj, in some cases guards facilitate the smuggling of phones inside the camp and the financial differentials are so strong that some Kurdish guards even purchase old smartphones from well-financed ISIS women who get new ones for themselves. While the use of phones for the foreigner annex in Al Hol is strictly forbidden, women from other sections of the camp could also purchase phones on their behalf and hand them over to foreign women staying in this most threatening part of the camp in exchange for a commission. Anti-ISIS women also rely on these smuggled in and illegal phones as lifelines back to family and friends. One anti-ISIS woman openly talked about how buying a phone is a costly affair as it costs a whopping \$500: **"The phones were less expensive. I bought this one for 150\$ Now for this price you can have a very old phone with many problems. They bring in new phones for 400 to 500\$. So it's more risky for the ones that bring things in and they (those who bring in) also take advantage of the situation we are in, we have no other choice."**

Apart from the smuggling of phones, renewed efforts have been diverted to freeing many women ISIS prisoners from the camps in the past 5 months. But what has been extraordinary is the recurrent aggressive PR campaigns of smuggling young children from Al Hol. As the rumors engulf the camp about how the SDF administration is doubling down on admitting the children, who have been exposed to the ideological indoctrination, into various deradicalization and rehabilitation programs in centers far away from the camp, the fears of mothers regarding separation from their children have triggered panic and anxiety amongst the pro-Islamic State women who then write to the various administrators of the

fundraising campaigns to raise money for facilitating the exit of these children from the camps. Up to now, male children over ages 11 or 12 have been taken from their mothers in the camps and cycled through rehabilitation centers in Qamishlo, spending some of their time imprisoned apart from, but in the same complex, as the al Hasakah adult male prisons. Some of these were the boys held hostage during the siege by ISIS fighters. The future for such boys is dire. Due to few options, given their home countries won't repatriate them, these boys who may be totally innocent are moved when they turn 18 from youth facilities to the adult male ISIS population. Thus their mothers who will be separated from them in either case wanting better for them, if pro-ISIS, turn to ISIS for help.

In many cases, the social media discourse indicated that the frantic appeals are made by the pro-Islamic State women for freeing their children – who in the case of pro-ISIS mothers have exhibited violent behavior toward aid workers and doctors and are under the constant radar of the SDF as the camp officials see these children of pro-ISIS wives as being the most vulnerable to radicalization due to their mothers' indoctrination. Apart from the children of pro-ISIS women being predisposed toward violence due to their mothers' encouragement, Russian women from Al Hol also claim that the camp guards hunt for these teenage boys because of their brawny and large physiques. When a woman sympathetic to ISIS on her Facebook pleaded for help for the release of her teenage son from the camp, many other women vented out their frustrations by berating the actions of these youth who under the influence of their pro-ISIS mothers not only hurl stones at other women and their children in the camps, spreading panic, but also hurt other humanitarian workers and doctors and as a result they claim that many aid organizations fearing for their safety have withdrawn their aid services from the camp residents. Indeed, in light of ISIS's repetitive [targeting of medical workers](#) and the threat from indoctrinated teenage boys, this has set a dangerous precedent for humanitarian organizations. Answering back to the plea made by the pro-ISIS women for help, another Russian camp resident acrimoniously writes, **“Who is to be blamed for the fact that these dogs are chasing your son. Yes, I also have a son Alhamdulillah. And I am raising him. And my son does not throw stones at his sisters, It is these big boys of yours that do not give us rest, In what they only press us before the kafirs.”** Another woman adds, **“They, (the SDF) Surrounded the market, drove two machines with machine guns, and stupid children, stupid mothers throw stones at them, provoking them. Then they will howl on the whole Internet that their children were killed by ladies also, a group of stunned Daesh women beat our sister by stealing money from her, beaten up for seeing her get help from Kafirs, transferring for sisters.”**

It is in this context, where countries refuse to repatriate minors, that the ISIS-linked Russian crowdfunding campaigns are rallying to speedily raise money for smuggling adolescents from Al Hol ostensibly to protect them from ultimately being imprisoned with the adult ISIS men, but likely from the point of view of ISIS they will be used to replenish ISIS's dwindling ranks and decreasing manpower. At least some of these escaped children are indoctrinated and prepared for [rigorous combat training to later fight for the black banner of ISIS in the Syrian \(Al Badia\) deserts](#). Traditionally such pleas for financing the escapes of children of ISIS militants used to only surface on closed private forums, but that has now changed with many donation advertisements aimed at releasing children now making their way to open public forums and public Telegram channels. In the first recent appeal of February, two Russian-linked ISIS channels predominantly created for crowdfunding these escapes have been aggressively pushing for raising the ransom money of \$11,000 for a 17-year-old Russian teenage boy who owing to his muscular build and ostensible activities of violence has been under constant supervision of the camp's security apparatus and also been “imprisoned,” as claimed by these pro-ISIS Russian channels. The emotive requests for freeing these teenage boys usually employs a manipulate narrative of how the prolonged stay of the teenage boys in the camp may expose them to the Asaysh's torture in jails or in worst cases they may also get killed by the SDF as an act of retribution against the terror group. While these claims are propaganda, it's true the children will ultimately end up in adult prisons as they age into it, which is a ghastly treatment of minors who were taken to ISIS with no fault of their own.

On the pro-ISIS Russian channel a message appeared: **“Brothers and sisters, a sister from the Al Hol camp turned to us today. She has a son, 17 years old. The situation is very difficult, because you always have to hide him from the damned Kurds, otherwise he will be taken to prison. There is an opportunity to pick him up from there, but for this you need \$11,000, everyone who reads it will think that Ogoo! Such an amount, but know that everything is easy for Allah, the most important**

thing is to take reason and trust in Allah properly. We opened a collection for this, let's help him get out of there so that he does not fall into the hands of these Kurdish dogs. . Let's be the cause of his leaving the camp, because Allah helps those who help their brother when they are in trouble." It remains unclear whether the funds are being raised for an Iraqi/Syrian child or child of an ISIS foreign fighter but as it is widely known that the rates for smuggling foreign ISIS women and youth are much higher than that of arranging the escape money for Syrian women and youth and Syrians are routinely released back into Syria if they are deemed deradicalized. The rate of \$11,000 suggests that the collected money will go for freeing a child of a foreign ISIS fighter with the other factors such as age, destination, smuggling method determining the final rate. (The cheapest rate involves no mode of transport, [followed by making their way out in water, food tanks, garbage trucks](#), or by brokering with the leaders in upper echelons of administration.) The stream of money that flows into these ISIS-linked Qiwi wallets is currently at a snail's pace but there have been some generous donors who have sometimes "generously" transferred \$300-\$500, expediting the "revenue collection" efforts.

The aggressive call for amplifying financial support for such ransom pleas to release ISIS youth involves a daily updating of the collection of the "ransom fees" on their Telegram pages and arbitrarily citing Quranic quotes regarding the obligation of releasing the prisoners from captivity (as shown in the above image) to keep up the momentum of cash flows. The children featured on the videos covering their faces, themselves requesting supporters to free them from these camps has even greater potential of garnering more sympathy and potentially more funds from ISIS supporters. The children having been indoctrinated with their mothers' toxic ideology and religious fervor are brainwashed into believing that if they are returned to their home countries they will be prevented from practicing true Islam and that they have to today live without their heroic ISIS fighter fathers because the "kuffars" ruthlessly spilled the blood of their fathers and other Muslims. A message that has been widely circulated as a direct donation advertisement features such children: **"This is the third year we have been in captivity in the camp. We have become adults, these godless Kurds can take us to their prisons. So don't be careless about it, don't let us grow up under their care and guidance, don't let them ruin our fitrah [inborn innocence] and make us the same apostates and enemies of Islam as they are!!! We need your dua!"** Paying heed to the security concerns, the administrators later opened a private group for the donations of this plea and it remains unclear how much money has been collected for the smuggled escapes of these teenage boys.

Apart from buying "educational materials" these IS-linked Russian channels have also focused on using the collected money to buy Qurans, and for buying gifts for children who took part in religious knowledge-seeking competitions and cleared the written and oral tests that were prepared as a part of their religious curriculum that has been created by the "madrassas" run by the women in the tents in camp Al Hol to further perpetuate the spread of ISIS's virulent ideology.

Apart from targeting the boys who might soon enter the phase of adulthood, the group also eyes orphans who are taken care of by pro-Islamic State women, who [capitalize on their claims of motherhood to sponsor their daily needs and escape the camps](#). The past instances as claimed by women on the German ISIS-linked Telegram group also include the smuggling of a group of [Uighur teenage boys from the camps and the recent](#) December attempt reported of how their vastly entrenched financial networks and handsome funding helped free a foreign ISIS woman and an orphaned child. The group actively involved in the human smuggling network Wilayah Al Khayr and "Unsere Schwester," which traditionally focused on prioritizing the escape of widows of ISIS fighters accompanying their orphan children, within the period of three months was able to raise \$15,000 for the release of an injured orphan and the widow of an ISIS fighter by sharing the news of her release on their Telegram channels: **"In the name of 'Wilayat al Khayr' and Our Sisters' we wish to announce glad tidings to you, by the grace of Allah as well as your generosity, another sister and her orphans were released from captivity."** These German-language ISIS-linked channels in the mid half of last year reportedly sent monthly transfers of \$500 to two Caucasian women and their children in Turkey who had been smuggled out of Al Hol, along with financially helping a deported ISIS fighter in Lebanon pay off debt that he incurred while paying his bail charges. Another advertisement on this channel included a plea for \$2,000 to help 5 Arab fighters escape "who had been betrayed and spied upon." These two ISIS-linked German channels collaborating with other channels back in August and September 2020 additionally claimed to have generated sufficient

capital for the medical treatment of escaped ISIS children in Syria and in unison with two other channels, “Sisters in Captivity” and “Our Rose,” claimed to have arranged a whopping €10,000 over a period of 5 months by setting up three different PayPal accounts for legal fees and daily [sustenance of the family of convicted Austrian IS recruiter and radical preacher Ebu Tijima, who was](#) sentenced to 20 years in prison by a local criminal court in Austria. The fact that even after their accounts were flagged multiple times and ultimately blocked by PayPal, after which the donors transferred an amount directly into the personal account of ISIS jihadist Ebu Tijama, reflects how skillfully these fundraisers have been able to exploit the loopholes in the various online payment gateways and their countries’ banking systems. Some fundraisers have also capped the minimum transfer value at €100 if they want to “contribute” to the “cause of freeing the prisoners.” Another innovative method of raising funds to attract more supporters has led these German ISIS-linked channels to set up a buy-and-sell market of secondhand goods on Telegram with the proceeds generated from this business utilized for financing the monthly expenses of the women in ISIS camps. From watches, hijabs, Qurans, phones, attire for children, religious books to shoes, all are sold at inexpensive prices ranging from \$5 to \$25 Euros. Thus it has become a sustainable business model for such fundraisers to collaboratively set up new business ventures such as “Muwahideen [Monotheist] perfumes, Islamic clothing for children, selling of delicacies” and as they claim that the revenue generation would go for the families of prisoners, their businesses gain more popularity and prominence and lure in more Muslims to buy the products resulting in even more financial resources to support these women prisoners in the camps.

Since the beginning of January 2022 online crowdfunding campaigns have gathered steam for collecting “ransom fees” geared toward freeing male prisoners and women from the detention camps in Syria. These fundraisers have also focused on aiding the women to pay off heavy debts they incurred while scrambling to arrange for financial assistance to make their way out of camps. A very active Islamic State-linked Russian financial private network, “**Help the believers,**” likewise oversees soliciting funds for freeing the male prisoners, teenage boys and smuggling of female ISIS loyalists from Al Hol camp. This Russian channel has been able to bank on their wide social media outreach to gain enough financial backing from the supporters to bankroll many escapes within the time period of 2 months. The administrator claimed before the ISIS attack on the Al Hasakah prison they had managed to raise within a period of 1 month \$10,000 out of \$20,000 needed for brokering the release of their fatally injured high-ranking Islamic State leader out of the Syrian prisons, a channel that additionally “had helped many sisters by providing financial support.” In a closed Telegram group, the organizer of the fundraiser wrote, “**My dear brothers and sisters. After collecting for the ransom of the sisters, we, together with the channel, want to open a collection for the wounded brother. He had a lot of wounds in the path of Allah and he held a great position in our State until he was imprisoned. The brother was distinguished by his disposition and help to the sisters. But now he is in the same position. He needs an operation because his leg was broken during the arrest, he is already covered in wounds and he had a lot of operations in the way of Allah.**” It remains unclear whether the ISIS leader whose exit they are negotiating was detained in Al Ghweiran prison, or in the 30 detention centers in Qamishli, or other prisons under the SDF control, in the detention facilities controlled by the Assad regime or in the Turkish-backed SNA territories. But the demand of \$20,000 suggests that the attempts are being made to release a non-Syrian high-ranking foreign ISIS fighter. In the month of December, the “Help the Believers” channel in tandem with another channel, “Help the oppressed sisters in Al Hol,” claimed to have raised another \$3,000 for freeing two Syrian women from Al Hol camp and another \$1,500 which facilitated the way of an alleged Syrian ISIS fighter out of the prison for which he also wrote a letter thanking his “immigrant brothers” for sponsoring his release. The monitoring of earlier fundraisers highlight that some of the fighters and Syrian women have been bribed out of or smuggled from the prisons and IDP camps in Tel Abyad that are under the control of the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army. In the given letter, the ISIS-related Russian channel writes how they generated funds for the release of an ISIS-linked Syrian woman, Umm Dua, for \$1,600 and as a testament of her release purportedly shared the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army affiliated military court’s legal papers labeled “reconciliation agreement” that sanctioned the release of this woman. Such official documents or agreements substantiate claims that ISIS sympathizers’ money has been utilized for the release of prisoners and helps the organizers of these fundraising campaigns prove their credibility to their donors, which in turn eases and smooths the pace of their money collection.

Apart from gaining leverage over a slew of fundraising pages, garnering credibility also becomes pertinent at a time when the members of the SDF security services work hard to counter them by employing counterintelligence operations, i.e. by posing as ISIS-linked financial facilitators or smugglers to gather intelligence on those collaborating with or supporting IS and to also thwart escape attempts from the camps as a part of wider strategy bolstering their information-gathering capabilities on terrorist groups. This can be seen in the wider context of how widely it is known that [Turkey's hawala transfer system](#) evidently has been used as premier gateway for moving ISIS funds in and out of Syrian camps and the group has also resorted to traditional methods of money transfer via exchange offices and jewelry companies that were set up in Syria and Turkey. Indeed, one ICSVE interviewee very familiar with ISIS's use of the hawala system stated that once money arrives into the Turkish hawala system it is basically already accessible throughout Syria as well. The recent [MASAK report \(the body attached to the Turkey Financial Ministry\) divulged how the ISIS collaborator in Turkey](#), who acquired Turkish citizenship, through their various companies registered as businesses dealing in construction and industrial supplies had facilitated the transfer of equipment required to make drones and improvised explosive devices to top ISIS leaders in Syria. Even an alleged ISIS supporter/media operative who is based in Idlib active on social media hinted at how it is easy to bribe the Turkish-backed SNA faction leaders for as little as \$100 to allow the release of ISIS leaders or let them move through their territory, referring that the territories under their control could act as safer refuge for them than Idlib.

Another network run by an immigrant German woman living in Idlib and working in coordination with other German crowdfunding pages claimed in February that they had successfully raised around \$10,000 within a month through the secure payment gateways of Western Union and RIA money transfer to "negotiate" the price for the release of another wounded ISIS fighter ostensibly from SDF-administered prisons. The target audience for this channel is European IS sympathizers. She reflected on an example of how this was possible under the reconciliation scheme in which the channel claims the SDF administration had previously released a local Syrian ISIS fighter in exchange for \$8,000 who was also obliged to sign a declaration form promising not to join any terrorist organization and to leave the SDF-controlled territory of northeastern Syria. Indeed, she is correct that Syrian ISIS members are released by the SDF and AANES government if they are deemed deradicalized and not to have blood on their hands, but officially, at least, no money exchanges hands for these releases.

However, as per the declaration form given bearing the YPG insignia, found on Telegram, the inmates are expected to pay a fee to the public finance department in return for their release. A [Guardian report corroborates this claim as](#) the report states that two "former" Islamic State fighters have been freed through such arrangements in 2019 without trials. If this is true, also in the case of IS fighters accused of committing acts of brutal killings, they get an opportunity to walk free with impunity to later pose an unprecedented security threat to the locals in the region. However, AANES officials have assured ICSVE researchers that only those judged not to have blood on their hands are ever released.

In this context, the German ISIS-linked woman posted how the prisoners are freed by negotiating with the authorities: **"Because our brothers fight these dogs, and of course no prison will officially release them except only for money for black work that takes place under the table. How do you think brothers get free here, like sisters from the camps free themselves?"** Not with the help of Muslims, wrote one of the admins on the group chat. She further writes, **"We said that if the brother is released, they (SDF) should let us know, and if it is possible, a Dalil or other documents will be sent. The money just got here a few days ago. Inshallah Sabar."** As the research showed, immigrant ISIS loyalists in Syria are the ones who steer/drive donation efforts for freeing the IS prisoners alongside sympathizers in their home countries and communicating in the home language draws in more immigrant and overseas donations.

Touching on the highly contentious debate about whether financial support is only provided to the ISIS loyalists in the camp, and about the aspect of commissions to be paid for the money flowing into Al Hol, the administrator of a fundraising channel that caters to raising money for the daily expenses of women in al Hol stated, **"We help everyone who asks for. They know, of course, since this money is sent inside the camp, and who gets the profit from it? Think for yourself. There are also many swindlers who, at the expense of other people's troubles, make fees for themselves, I also met a lot of scammers, so**

we try to do everything transparently, and for 3 years Alhamdulillah [Praise Allah] have not let anyone down, we make reports, and we write who received how much.” Countering this claim, a Russian woman disillusioned with ISIS says this is not the case. She commented that, **“I have not received help through my channel for a long time. I work here, I cook food for sale, that’s how I make a living. I don’t get help from anyone here. I began to study the religion of Islam and realized that this state [ISIS] was not Islamic at all. I don’t keep in touch with relatives. Hence I feel some of these organizations only help those who support ISIS.”** Some women loyal to IS claim how the donors shouldn’t support the “Hazimis,” i.e. extremist takfiris in the camp who disrespect “Amir Al Mumimeen”. Hazimis is a tag for women who are more radical than ISIS in their ideological interpretation and who excommunicate every Muslim who doesn’t adhere to their strict and often brutal interpretations of Islam and jihad. In the words of one woman from camp Al Roj, **“They consider ISIS as disbelievers because the most extreme are saying that ISIS isn’t right in considering people being or not being muslims. For the most extreme people, if you don’t consider someone being a disbeliever while (for them) he is, then they consider you also disbelievers. I got into ideological arguments many times with many women but some don’t want to open their eyes.. So I stopped having arguments with people.”**

Further, as these IS-linked fundraising networks have evaded the scrutiny of banking systems and intelligence agencies by mastering the art of slipping through these security cracks to deliver financial assistance for these women, it is difficult to determine whether the delivered money is catered toward only looking after their daily needs, or for weapons purchases or raising smuggling capital. Tracing the trail of money becomes a tall task for intelligence agencies as money is channeled across diverse and informal networks spread across the globe and accepted through highly secured anonymous complex payment systems (use of cryptocurrencies, i.e. anonymous Bitcoin transfers, anonymous transfers through Qiwi Wallet terminals, Direct Money transfers through Western Union and hawala and money service businesses) to circumvent the formal banking sector, all of which mutates into cash smuggling finally arriving at the last destination in the camps. The crowdfunding platforms like PayPal have also been used to raise funds that are wired to recipients through private bank accounts and transported in cash into Syria via Turkey. This triggers a rather opaque convoluted financial ecosystem where the lines between legitimate charitable giving and sponsoring terrorism get blurred, complicating the counterterrorism efforts to hold these individuals to account who bankroll the notorious activities and operations of ISIS. Many surreptitious means are advised by these channels. For example, the Russian fundraising campaign asks the donors to pay above \$1,000 rubles to avoid multiple transfers as the repetitive transfers in wallets might bring them under the watchful eye of the law enforcement authorities possibly leading to their imprisonment. Other fundraisers from Europe only accept donations above €100. Tajik channels repeatedly post security awareness tips asking the donors to hide their faces while going to Qiwi terminals to avoid their movements being captured by the security cameras and strongly instruct the followers to burn the given number in which they were asked to transfer the money.

As observed, it is the foreign contingent of ISIS supporters in the annex part of the camp that remain most vocal on social media about their support for the group and it thus cannot be underestimated how and in what capacities these true believers blinded by their IS ideology might provide support for the group once they have been able to escape from the camps, as evident in the earlier case study of an immigrant German-speaking woman who claims to raise funds for freeing the prisoners allegedly from Idlib, following her own escape from the camps. A group of French immigrant women who are currently detained in Al Roj and Al Hol have also requested a year ago in an official letter that the French government strip their citizenship, stating they don’t want to come back as they cannot freely practice Islam in France as well as lamenting about how the France government will separate the children from their mothers after they are repatriated also forcing other women to toe the line who are in favor of repatriation.

The ISIS loyalist mothers in the camps continue giving combat lessons to children as evident from the videos uploaded on Facebook where the child is seen engaged in boxing or crossing roadblocks, raising pro-ISIS slogans and absorbing ISIS publications, showing how these mothers are rearing the next generation of fighters of the terrorist group. Some believe that living under ISIS they have seen the worst and though it met a sad end they still believe that they benefited from it in many ways and it developed their understanding related to the “state of the heart and the understanding of religion.” Through their

Telegram channels, they reflect on how living under then-Islamic State territory and facing the bombs, hunger, loss of property and loss of loved ones taught them to respect the virtues of patience and forbearance and “hope” and made them stronger by “way of testing their resolve.” One writes, **“There was no money, no opportunity to earn it, not to borrow from someone ... However, there was not a day that I would not eat, at least once a day. So even if today I start to worry about this, the memories of that passage from my life quickly bring me to my senses and it doesn’t bother me so much anymore. This concerns not only subsistence, it includes everything, including offspring and the same freedom.”**

That some of these women in the camps remain so highly committed to ISIS and deeply radicalized and are training their children the same underlines the deep need for thoughtful deradicalization programs to be instituted in the camps where these women can examine how they really want to live, what their limitations were both in their home countries and in Syria under ISIS, and in programs where Islam can be taught in a manner that these women can see that the takfir ideology does not actually represent the teachings of Islam as interpreted by the top Islamic scholars of the world.

Another woman from Al Hol states online how she would resist going to Al Roj as women there don’t wear sharia-compliant clothing and there is no scope of supporting the khilafah. Other Russian woman defend the Islamic State against the accusations of IS being labeled as Hazimis (i.e. takfiris) due to their propensity to excommunicate every Muslim who doesn’t share their worldview. On the piecemeal efforts of IS on funding these supporters, a Russian woman fervently writes that they help them silently by not boasting to the world about every single penny they donate. Other women revel in memories of Caliphate days, glorifying the virtue of jihad and hoping that their children turn out like their fathers who were ISIS fighters. Adding to this perspective, another pro-ISIS woman writes, **“The Khilafah brought us not only Izza [honour, fame and power] and Sharia but also once-in-a-lifetime experience. I feel blessed and thankful that I could be a part of it and it breaks my heart not to have sharia to live under.”** Further blasting at the Europeans who eschewed jihad for staying in Western comforts, she reasserts that they don’t have any regrets for the situation they are in now in the camps. Another woman in a bitter tone writes, **“The best years of our lives have been the years with the Islamic State, and the only regret I have, it’s being alive out of Baghouz today, because I hate it being in the hands of kufr who fought us for (defending) our religion.”** Evidently, she prefers victory or martyrdom, as the ISIS saying goes.

The monitoring of the social media landscape and ISIS-linked crowdfunding campaigns shows a modest increase in the constant appeals by various crowdfunding networks for arranging escapes and releases of male ISIS fighters, women adherents and teenage boys from Al Hol camp and, as stated above, their successes in releasing/smuggling out these detained IS-linked individuals brokered through official channels, i.e. under the guise of reconciliation schemes where the fighters are released in exchange for hefty fees, or discreetly through their own human smuggling networks, alongside actual prison breakouts, reinforces a very real threat of ISIS resurgence. This comes at a time following the prison attack when the SDF security forces have already tightened the security over all the activities in the outdoor camps, and revamped security infrastructure in all the detention centers housing embattled male ISIS fighters. With respect to the prisoner release reconciliation schemes, SDF leaders have stated that though their administration has released some IS members who haven’t committed heinous crimes or who posed no significant threat through local Syrian Arab tribal mediations, they have [blatantly rejected the claims of freeing high-profile ISIS militants and leaders from prison that pose a grave security threat](#) in return for attractive bribes and payments. The SDF claim is underlined by the fact that it would be against their own interests to free high-level and battle-hardened ISIS fighters who can return to kill them. This research puts a clear emphasis on not only dissecting those individuals who are at the forefront of pro-ISIS fundraising campaigns operating from within and outside of Syria, but also those in the internal political structures including the Turkish-backed rebels and security apparatus who discreetly facilitate settlements leading to the release of high-profile, mid-level IS members, and funnel money and weapons for ISIS’s sleeper cells or smuggle phones inside the camps in exchange for staggering amounts of bribes thus indirectly abetting and fueling the resurgence of ISIS.

In Syria, for ISIS, Al Hol remains an ideological stronghold for many pro-ISIS women and provides a refuge for many of its clandestine operations and acts as one artery for its financial networks. And we see

that while the killing of ISIS's leader Abu Ibrahim Hashemi Al Qureshi by U.S. special operations forces in early February in Idlib province might have dealt a strong blow to the group's operational capabilities and hopes of resurgence, the group has a very horizontal leadership with multiple cells plotting duplicate schemes (such as the prison break) which scramble to navigate the organizational turbulence and to address the leadership crisis that might dampen the moral of their fighters. However, even without their previous leader, the group seems capable to rise again as it rigorously focuses on reviving its ranks and on spreading more menace, terror and bloodshed in the Al Hol camp and the surrounding region.

As security challenges overwhelmed humanitarian concerns in the camp, the SDF introduced aggressive security/monitoring measures and bolstered its surveillance capabilities. Despite this, violent incidents and killings by ISIS operatives continue incessantly. ISIS operatives [killed three Iraqi refugees and aid workers in January](#), followed in February by an alleged attempt to kidnap female guards amidst [chaos emanating from deadly fire in the camp](#) that culminated in killing of one child and injuring many women in the annex of the camp. The beginning of March saw ISIS sleeper agents injuring two internal security forces, subsequently raising the threat perception of the group in the eyes of SDF administration who now claim that [they recently got intelligence that ISIS was planning](#) to launch a large attack on the Al Hol camp. Given ISIS's past success with its "Breaking the Walls" campaign to revive its ranks, this is not beyond imagination.

This research also demonstrates that the increasing German and Russian crowdfunding campaigns that eye for brokering release of ISIS-linked women and children from the camps were able to complete the money collection efforts for smuggling nearly six ISIS-linked women from the camp in recent months. [With more than 700 attempted escapes last year](#), and the increasing interest and the funds generated by funding campaigns in helping the pro-ISIS women in getting out of camps, thwarting escapes from the camps continues to be an uphill security battle for the SDF. While those who remain inside are not all pro-ISIS, the ISIS enforcers continue to engage in violent clashes with those who don't subscribe to the ISIS worldview, indoctrinating their children to carry out violence and thereby incubating the next generation of the ISIS fighters.

There could be a huge price to pay if ISIS steps up its attack in northeastern Syria or more of its true believers, blinded by the IS ideology, get an opportunity to escape. Yet we see many supporters from all around the world open the pathway for their exit from the camps through these crowdfunding campaigns. To counter this practice, [the SDF had arrested many human smugglers and weapon smugglers in the past year](#) but the struggle continues unabated.

The aforementioned documented cases also show how the freed individuals related to ISIS might potentially join the ISIS ranks in different conflict theatres such as Idlib to work in a logistical or operational capacity to facilitate attacks, or serve as the financial facilitators nourishing the group's insurgency. Chillingly, we must also remember that ISIS was adept at sending its fighter back home to launch horrific attacks as well such as in Belgium and France, most notably. IS will continue to capitalize on the deteriorating security condition in camps by rigorously expanding its logistical networks for moving money, weapons and women who stay loyal to the group. At a time when smuggling prices start at \$16,000 for each foreign woman smuggled to Turkey with two or three children, ISIS leaders extract a significant portion of smuggling fees money pumped into their treasury by sympathizers. Coupled with this, the estimation that the bank payments to camp [residents amounted to more than \\$500,000](#), according to the testimony of 50 women inside and outside the camp, as well as local Kurdish officials and a former member of ISIS in Eastern Europe and a foreign fighter based in Idlib province involved in smuggling operations, the regular stream of money going in and out of the camps reflects the increasing interest on the part of the IS-affiliated crowdfunding networks and supporters to turn the facility of Al Hol into a central node for its financial operations helping to move its ["estimated \\$100 million in cash reserves."](#) As one woman speaking to ICSVE noted, "The ISIS leaders' women had everything during ISIS and now in the camps they still have everything, food, money, phones, while we have nothing."

For all these reasons, the SDF should do everything it can to avert another security disaster like the ISIS Ghweiran prison assault that might beget further instability in the entire region with the possible repercussions for the home countries of the escaped ISIS fighters as well as countries that might not be able to keep track of the movement of their citizens once escaped. This gives these escaped fighters and

the ISIS women sympathizers the opportunity to rejoin the terror group, replenishing the ranks and further bolstering ISIS manpower while also posing a grave threat to international security should they travel under the radar to mount attacks at home. The foreign women coming from these camps could prove to be a backbone for ISIS human smuggling and efforts as these women are well-positioned to attract funding and donations from ISIS sympathizers in their home countries with better understanding of their country's financial system to further exploit the related vulnerabilities for securing funding. Likewise, many appear more than ready to die for their misplaced militant jihadist beliefs and could be turned into traveling suicide bombers, bearers of ISIS's lethal violence into the West.

ISIS takedown policies by social media platforms clearly aren't working as fundraisers find ways around machine detection – for instance, spelling khalifa as k4lif4a – and manage to communicate unimpeded. Similarly, fundraising apps are being exploited by the group. While the SDF and AANES struggle to control the problem of the continued and growing threat of ISIS on their territory, the refusal response of much of the international community with regards to the repatriation of their nationals from the Syrian prison camps delays the solution in resolving the Al Hol quagmire, mirroring the unpleasant aftermath of the ISIS prison assault on the Al Sina prison. Without repatriations, countries need to face the dire fact that deradicalization programs aimed at the camp's inhabitants – while, if done correctly, are costly – need to be instituted to have any hope that the pro-ISIS women in Al Hol won't be raising a new generation of ISIS cadres we will all someday face.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/22 Israel: 4 killed; knife, car-ramming attack
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/22/world/middleeast/israel-stabbing-beersheba.html
GIST	<p>JERUSALEM — Four Israelis were killed in a knife and car-ramming attack in Beersheba, in southern Israel, on Tuesday afternoon, in the third attack on Israeli Jews in less than a week.</p> <p>The attacker rammed and killed a cyclist with his car outside a gas station, before entering the station and stabbing a woman to death, a police commander, Peretz Amar, said in a briefing near the crime scene.</p> <p>The attacker returned to his car, drove to a nearby shopping center and stabbed three women, one of whom died, the commander said. The attacker then drove to a nearby roundabout, crashed into a second car, got out and stabbed to death a fourth civilian, the commander said.</p> <p>Two armed passers-by tried to pacify the attacker before shooting him when he tried to stab one of them, according to video uploaded to social media on Tuesday evening. The attacker later died of his wounds, the police spokesman said.</p> <p>The attack was the latest instance of an uptick in stabbing attacks by Palestinians across the country in recent weeks. A Jewish jogger was stabbed and injured on Saturday while running through a residential district of West Jerusalem. A day later, two Israeli police officers were stabbed and injured in East Jerusalem.</p> <p>The attack was the first of its kind in Beersheba since 2015. A sleepy city at the northern end of the Negev desert, Beersheba is not usually at the center of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but it has become more prominent in recent months because of tensions over the ownership of nearby land claimed by Arab Bedouin.</p> <p>The spate of recent attacks has heightened fears of violence in April — when the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, the Jewish holiday of Passover and the Christian holiday of Easter unusually all fall at the same time. Ramadan is often a period of high tension in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza; tensions related to Ramadan helped stoke the Gaza war last May, and officials and analysts fear the convergence of three religious festivals could further inflame relations.</p> <p>The Israeli prime minister, Naftali Bennett, met with the leaders of Egypt and the United Arab Emirates in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, on Tuesday. The three did not explain in detail the substance of their discussion,</p>

but analysts said at least part of the focus was the possibility of violence in East Jerusalem and the West Bank in the coming weeks.

The Jordanian king, Abdullah II, is also expected to visit the West Bank later this month in a bid to lower tensions, Palestinian officials said this week.

The attack in Beersheba followed nearby protests and clashes between Arab citizens of Israel and the Israeli police. Bedouin residents of the area are resisting attempts by Israel to plant a forest on what some Bedouin families say is their ancestral land — a disagreement that to many Palestinians is emblematic of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israel says the families never had legal ownership of the plots.

The attack on Tuesday was praised by two Islamist militant groups, Hamas and Islamic Jihad, though neither claimed responsibility. Israeli media reported that the attacker was a teacher from a nearby Bedouin town who had served a jail term after admitting support for the Islamic State, the terrorist group that once controlled large parts of Iraq and Syria.

Leading Arab politicians in Israel condemned the attack, including Mansour Abbas, an Islamist leader who made history last year by becoming the first Arab Israeli to lead an independent Arab party into a governing coalition.

Mr. Abbas wrote on social media that his party, Raam, “condemns the criminal terror attack” and “extends its condolences to the families of the murdered and wishes a full recovery to the injured.”

He added: “The Arab citizens of the state are law abiding and denounce anyone who uses violence against other citizens. Raam calls on all citizens to protect the delicate fabric of joint life, to show responsibility and to advance tolerant discourse at this difficult hour.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/22 India: drop in terror incidents J-K region
SOURCE	https://theprint.in/india/there-has-been-substantial-progress-in-j-k-significant-decline-in-terrorist-incidents-govt-to-ls/883606/
GIST	<p>New Delhi [India], March 22 (ANI): The Central government on Tuesday informed the Lok Sabha that Jammu and Kashmir has improved substantially and there has been a significant decline in terrorist incidents in the region.</p> <p>Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai announced through a written reply that 25 out of 53 projects under Prime Minister’s Development package 2015 pertaining to 15 different ministries have been completed or substantially completed.</p> <p>Replying to a question asked by Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) leader Kunwar Danish Ali “Is the situation in J-K still not normal?”, the Minister said, “the government has instituted a robust security and intelligence grid along with proactive operations against terrorists in J-K”.</p> <p>“Therefore, the security situation in J-K has improved substantially and there has been a significant decline in terrorist incidents and infiltration of terrorists from across the border,” Rai said.</p> <p>Giving data, the Minister informed the Lower House, “The net infiltration has decreased from 143 in the year 2014 to only 31 in 2021 and the terrorist incidents also declined from 417 in the year 2018 to 229 in 2021.”</p> <p>The data also mentions that 138 infiltrations were noted in 2019 followed by 51 in 2020, and 255 terrorist incidents occurred in 2019 followed by 244 in 2020.</p>

Meanwhile, the Minister said, “257 terrorists were killed in the year 2018 followed by 157 in 2019, 221 in 2020 and 180 in the year 2021.” Rai further said that the government has taken several steps to boost the development of J-K.

“The progress of projects being implemented in the Union Territory (UT) of J-K under the Prime Minister’s Development Package-2015 has been accelerated. 53 different projects pertaining to 15 ministries are being implemented at a cost of Rs 58,477 crores, in various sectors such as Roads, Power, Health, Education, Tourism, Agriculture, Skill Development etc., out of which 25 projects have been completed or substantially completed,” said the Minister.

Rai said a new Central Sector Scheme has been notified on February 19, 2021, for the Industrial Development of UT of J-K, with an outlay of Rs 28,400 crores which is likely to provide employment to over 4.5 lakh people while boosting the industrial development of J-K.

He also said the government of J-K has approved a business revival package of Rs 1,352.99 crores on September 25, 2020.

Under languishing projects programme, Rai later said 1,193 projects worth Rs 1,984 crores were completed, including 5 projects which were incomplete for more than 20 years (15 projects for more than 15 years and 165 projects for more than 10 years.)

J-K has been declared Open Defecation Free (ODF) under Swachh Bharat Mission; and 100 per cent saturation has been achieved in 17 individual beneficiary centric schemes, including Saubhagya, Ujala, Ujjwala and Indradhanush schemes, said the Minister.

During the year 2020 to 2021, the MoS said, 1,289 road construction works were completed at a cost of Rs 1,638 crore.

“The construction work of 14,500 km of road has been completed so far under ‘Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, which has connected about 2,000 places.”

Work has been taken up for setting up of one All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) each in J-K Divisions at a cost of Rs 2,000 crores each, besides seven other medical colleges in the UT of J-K, he said, adding “Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Jammu and Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Jammu have been made functional”.

“21 hydropower projects with an aggregate capacity of 5,186 Mega Watt have been taken up for development in next five years, and international flight from Srinagar to Sharjah has been started on October 23, 2021,” added the Minister.

In addition, Rai said, night flights from Jammu and Srinagar have also been started.

The scope of the High-Density Plantation Scheme for Apple has been expanded to include Mango, Litchi, Cherry, Walnut, and Kashmiri Saffron has been given the Geographical Indication (GI) tag, said Rai.

Under fast-track recruitment, 26,330 posts have been identified in various departments in the UT of J-K and taken up for recruitment, said the MoS, adding “presently selection process has been completed with respect to 11,324 posts”.

[Return to Top](#)

Suspicious, Unusual

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	03/22 Parents billed for care of own children
SOURCE	https://crosscut.com/news/2022/03/foster-system-paradox-parents-billed-care-their-children

In the vast majority of cases where children are removed from their homes and taken into foster care, family poverty is a big factor. It could be a refrigerator without food or an apartment without electricity. Yet for nearly four decades, parents struggling with this level of need have been billed for their children's care and obligated to pay the state — even when they have no income.

The debt that accrues from unpaid child-support charges can linger for decades, long after a youth has grown into adulthood and left foster care. Washington still has hundreds of open cases on its books from the 1980s and '90s. The state is now trying to end this practice.

The idea behind charging child support to parents with kids in foster care stems from the Reagan-era belief that families, even those that abused or neglected their children, must take responsibility for them. But since the 1984 federal law requiring these payments was enacted, research has shown that squeezing money from already-struggling families only deepens their problems and keeps kids in state care longer.

On top of that, it costs the state more to run down debtors than the amount it stands to collect.

Dorothy Gorder, for instance, was homeless and drug-addicted in Seattle when she gave birth to a daughter in 2011. The baby was taken into foster care straight from the hospital, and Gorder started racking up monthly child support bills that she rarely paid. Two years later, she says, her debt totaled nearly \$4,000. But Gorder, who had no permanent address, didn't even realize what was happening until police presented her with an arrest warrant for nonpayment and took her to jail.

The same thing happened again and again — so frequently that Gorder couldn't help noting the absurdity. "About the 10th time, I said to the judge, 'Can I point something out to you? I'm a homeless drug addict. It is costing the state so much more money to arrest me, house me and then release me than what I owe'," recalled Gorder, who is now sober. "I think somebody must have done the math because they were like, she's got a point."

The gist of Gorder's street-level calculation has been borne out in numerous government reports. In 2019, the state Division of Child Support [found](#) that for every dollar spent trying to chase down parents in arrears for foster care payments, Washington collected just 39 cents.

Similar patterns have shown up [across the country](#). Put simply, making parents pay for foster care ends up costing states money.

"It's a pittance, and it's ridiculous," said Dee Wilson, a longtime former administrator in Washington's child welfare department. "The charges do no good for anything or anyone. Really, they come out of a moral argument about who ought to be responsible for kids."

The state Department of Children, Youth and Families is now embroiled in negotiations with the federal government to halt this practice — except in cases when parents abandon their children. However, old debts still on the books would remain.

And there are thousands.

Since 1984, more than 137,000 parents with kids in care have been charged anything from \$50 to several hundred dollars a month. About 10,140 cases remain open and unpaid, for a total debt of \$28,516,931, according to state officials. That's about \$2,811 per family. (Child support due to divorces is not included in these calculations.)

Gorder's daughter was eventually adopted and her mother's case closed. But before that happened, the few payments Gorder made came through drug deals. "I told the judge, 'I had to sell meth to be able to pay you guys back, so here you go — it's the only \$50 I've got,'" she said.

For child welfare agencies dedicated to supporting families, cases like Gorder's make a point that is difficult to ignore: Child-support charges can perpetuate the very problems and behaviors that brought a family to the attention of Child Protective Services in the first place.

Each year, about 4,000 new cases are referred for collections, with monthly payments based on each parent's employment history, even if they are currently without work.

"When we get this referral, we're looking for any kind of wage history," said Jake Hughes, who directs policy at the Division of Child Support and acknowledged the difficulty of calculating a feasible charge for parents who lack a regular paycheck.

"We try to balance history, potential and current status to make our determination," he said.

In 2021, about 800 parents were making monthly payments of \$140 to \$170. About 4,000 others were paying about \$60 — often through garnished wages — according to Allison Krutsinger, director of government affairs at the Department of Children, Youth and Families. (Parents made bigger payments during months when the federal government was providing COVID-19 stimulus checks, she noted.)

Gorder's status as a person without housing eventually allowed her to petition the state to stop adding new charges to her bill — though the original debt went onto her credit report, and sat there for years while she worked to get sober. State law permits the Division of Child Support to add 12% interest, but Hughes said his department rarely does so, especially in foster care cases.

For Jeremiah Donier, the 14 months that his child spent in foster care resulted in a bill of nearly \$5,000 and led him to file for bankruptcy, he said.

Donier was a first-time parent, living in Spokane, when the family's pediatrician became alarmed at bruises and a cut lip on the Doniers' baby girl. Jeremiah, who later pleaded guilty to third-degree child assault, says he had difficulty handling the stresses of new parenthood and controlling his temper. The classes and coaching required by his caseworker helped enormously. But the damage to his finances lingered, long after his daughter returned home.

Donier said he was forced to resign from his \$30,000-per-year county government job because of the assault charges, which left him and his wife — unemployed and staggering through post-partum depression — with no income and a monthly foster care bill of about \$385.

"We sold plasma in order to get food and gas to get to our parenting program," Jeremiah said. Each visit earned him and his wife about \$100 each. "We went down about twice a month."

Today, much has changed. The Doniers live on Whidbey Island, where Jeremiah coaches other parents through the child welfare maze. But the hangover from his journey through the system hindered the family's ability to build a stronger foundation, he said.

"The child support fees basically impacted my ability to recover financially, because those charges were on my credit report for years," he said.

Long before Donier was struggling to pay off his debt, child welfare experts had clear evidence that most families in foster care were poor. In 2009, researchers at the University of Washington found that 81% were receiving food stamps or other financial help. Nearly half reported household incomes under \$10,000.

But not until last summer were advocates able to make this point loud enough to be heard at the uppermost levels of state government.

"It's simple," said Shrounda Selivanoff, public policy director at the Children's Home Society of Washington, who was instrumental in pushing the issue onto the Department of Children, Youth and

	<p>Family’s agenda. “The thrust of the department now is keeping families together. But if we take money away from families, we are ultimately hindering reunification and impacting children.”</p> <p>That message prompted department Secretary Ross Hunter to seek the support of state Sen. Christine Rolfes, D-Bainbridge Island, chair of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, for ending foster care child support. The money coming in is nowhere near the actual cost of providing care, Hunter pointed out in a letter last month. Its primary effect is prolonging foster care.</p> <p>“We’re trying to remove old policies that are financially stupid and damaging to families,” Hunter wrote. As backup, he pointed toward research showing that every \$100 charged to a family delays reunification by about six months. “Six additional months of foster care is vastly more expensive” than whatever the state collects, Hunter added, and that doesn’t count “the eventual societal costs of traumatized children.”</p> <p>Changing the decades-old child support policy might mean fewer jobs for people hired to chase down parents in arrears, Hunter acknowledged.</p> <p>But, he concluded, “I am not running a jobs program. I am trying to make the world better for kids.”</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/22 Antarctica heat wave broke records
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2022/03/22/antarctica-heat-record-melt-climate/
GIST	<p>Antarctica has entered fall, yet temperatures rose 70 degrees (39 Celsius) above normal last week on its eastern ice sheet — an unprecedented occurrence for any time of year. Scientists on-site even appeared to strip down to shorts and no T-shirt to celebrate the occasion.</p> <p>Satellite imagery and computer models indicate significant snow, rain and melting also occurred. During the heat wave, the ice sheet experienced its fourth-wettest day in more than four decades, according to the Modèle Atmosphérique Régionale (MAR), a regional climate model that studies the melting of the polar ice caps.</p> <p>“Usually, the climate of Antarctica is too cold to have significant accumulation of snow and most of liquid water from melt or rainfall is absorbed by the snowpack and refreezes,” Xavier Fettweis, a climate scientist from the University of Liège who coordinates the development of MAR, wrote in an email. Yet, Fettweis said snowfall led to the ice sheet gaining 69 gigatons of mass from March 16 to 18, three times the usual rate.</p> <p>The MAR indicates the heaviest precipitation occurred near the coast, with rainfall accumulation of more than an inch, or 50 millimeters. (Note that these values are not direct measurements but modeled quantities based on atmospheric conditions.)</p> <p>“That would be tremendous for that area,” said Jonathan Wille, a researcher studying polar meteorology at Grenoble Alpes University in France. “It doesn’t even rain here almost ever. Normally they have like a few millimeters of rain per year. And it’s March — it should be getting cold.”</p> <p>The model also showed some melting along the coastline, although it appears to be very localized. While some areas, like the Totten Glacier, appear to have experienced some melt, other glaciers along the coastline appeared largely unaffected. In any case, this one melt event will not affect the stability of the glaciers in the area presently, Wille said.</p> <p>The precipitation occurred when circulation patterns around Antarctica directed a very strong atmospheric river, or strip of moist air, into the eastern coastline of the continent on March 15. Atmospheric rivers typically drop about 10 to 20 percent of all snowfall across East Antarctica.</p>

“Moisture intrusion events and atmospheric rivers — they do happen, but this is just to a different degree of intensity,” Wille said. He said the duration and intensity of the event were greater than scientists would normally expect.

The warm, moist air mass was then squished on the Antarctic interior for days as a strong blocking high-pressure system, or “heat dome,” moved into the region — causing temperatures to soar like never before.

The Russian meteorological observatory Vostok — about 808 miles from the South Pole and 11,444 feet above sea level — hit 0.1 degrees (minus-17.7 Celsius) on March 18. The record high shattered the monthly record of minus-26.7 (minus-32.6 Celsius) set on March 4, 1967. The average high temperature at the station is around minus-63 (minus-53 Celsius) in March.

The Concordia Research Station, about 350 miles from Vostok, hit its highest temperature on record for any month at 10 degrees (minus-12.2 Celsius). Typical high temperatures in March hover around minus-56 (minus-48.7 Celsius). The previous all-time high temperature was 7.34 degrees (minus-13.7 Celsius) on Dec. 17, 2016.

Temperatures on the eastern ice sheet remained above average through Monday and began to slowly return to normal. [On Tuesday](#), Vostok recorded minus-50 degrees (minus-45.7 Celsius).

Temperatures in western Antarctica and near the South Pole [remained cold](#) last week. On March 18, the Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station [recorded minus-60 degrees](#) (-51.4 degrees Celsius), which is typical for this time of year.

While more research is needed to study the climate change connection, researchers are comparing the event to the Pacific Northwest heat wave in June 2021, which broke temperature records by 10 degrees or more in spots.

That heat wave event “was something that wasn’t thought to be possible until it actually happened. It was never observed before, and the atmosphere patterns that led to it happening were just not thought to be possible either until it happens,” Wille said. “And that’s what’s basically happened here over Antarctica.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/23 Permanent DST bad for health?
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/why-permanent-daylight-saving-time-is-bad-for-your-health-sleep-scientists-say-11648002326?mod=hp_lead_pos13
GIST	<p>Permanently moving to daylight-saving time is likely to cause more harm than good when it comes to our health, sleep science indicates.</p> <p>For years, researchers have bemoaned the biannual changing of the clocks, saying shifting just one hour is linked to a slew of negative health effects, including an increased risk of heart attack and stroke. But when the U.S. Senate recently passed a bill to make daylight-saving time permanent, sleep experts became more alarmed.</p> <p>Legislators picked the wrong time, they say.</p> <p>Our internal clocks are connected to the sun, which aligns more closely with permanent standard time, says Muhammad Adeel Rishi, a pulmonologist and sleep physician at Indiana University. When the clocks spring forward, our internal clocks don’t change but are forced to follow society’s clock rather than the sun. DST is like permanent social jet lag.</p> <p>Dr. Rishi is one of the authors of a 2020 position statement from the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, a professional society, supporting making standard time—not daylight-saving time—permanent.</p>

“Of the three choices—permanent daylight-saving time, permanent standard time or where we are now, which is switching between the two—I think permanent DST is the worst solution,” says Phyllis Zee, professor of neurology and director of the Center for Circadian and Sleep Medicine at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine.

Many of us like when the clocks arbitrarily move an hour ahead. Sure, we lose an hour of sleep for one day but springing forward means spring and summer evenings with more light, which is great for socializing and good for many businesses.

But sleep researchers say permanent daylight-saving time means we are always an hour off from the internal clock in our bodies, which disrupts our circadian rhythms, sleep and all of our biological systems. Changing the clocks has been linked to short-term increases in [car accidents](#), [medical errors](#), heart attacks and strokes. Research suggests there may also be a more sustained negative health impact linked to a chronic circadian misalignment during permanent DST, including increased risks of metabolic and cardiovascular disorders and cancer in areas where the sun rises later.

Our internal circadian clocks are in nearly every cell in our body and influence everything from hormone levels to blood pressure. Disrupting this internal clock by even an hour can throw the balance off.

“Day after day of eating at the wrong time, being active at the wrong time, sleeping at the wrong time, build up” into longer-term health effects, says Erin Flynn-Evans, a San Francisco-based sleep and circadian researcher and consultant to the AASM’s public safety committee.

AASM [issued a statement following the Senate’s Sunshine Protection Act](#), which would make daylight-saving time permanent, and pointed to its [2020 position statement](#) in support of permanent standard time.

[A 2019 position paper from the Society for Research on Biological Rhythms](#) also called for abolishing DST.

One of the big problems with permanent DST, objectors note, is that in the winter the sun will rise later and many schoolchildren will be walking to school in the dark.

On the western edge of the eastern time zone in Indiana, for instance, the sun won’t rise in the winter until about 9 a.m., notes Dr. Rishi. “You’re basically putting these kids two hours off from their circadian biology,” he says.

Permanent DST could be particularly difficult for teenagers who biologically have a delayed internal clock which makes them get tired later at night and wake up later in the morning, sleep scientists say. Early school start times already disrupt their natural rhythms. Permanent DST would exacerbate this problem.

Children and adults alike need sunlight in the morning to train circadian rhythms to wake up and be alert in the morning and to be sleepy and fall asleep at night, Dr. Zee says.

Too much light in the evening has been linked to [an increased risk for diabetes and hypertension](#), says Dr. Zee. Research has also shown a greater risk of chronic illnesses, [including cancer](#), in places that receive less light in the morning. Such studies show associations, not a definitive cause and effect, so it is unclear what other factors may be playing a role.

Data from lab studies has also shown a negative impact of night light on health. Dr. Zee’s lab [recently published a study](#) that indicates that healthy people who slept with moderate lighting overnight showed an increased heart rate overnight and increased insulin resistance the next day compared with people who slept in a room with no light.

Dr. Rishi hopes that sleep specialists will be able to weigh in on the science of permanent DST when the U.S. House of Representatives holds public hearings on the bill.

	<p>If not, he's hopeful that history will repeat itself. The U.S. government has unsuccessfully tried moving to permanent DST at least three times before. Most recently in 1974 the U.S. was on DST for less than a year before it reversed course.</p> <p>"There were reports of kids getting into accidents and walking to school in pitch black. Parents found it outrageous that kids had to go to school when it was so dark outside," says Dr. Rishi.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/22 Study: wildfires pose socioeconomic risk
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/22/wildfires-will-pose-great-socioeconomic-risk-in-future-say-researchers
GIST	<p>Wildfires will pose a greater socioeconomic risk in years to come, scientists have predicted, as they increasingly burn agricultural areas and harm populations.</p> <p>A study uses machine learning to model where wildfires are likely to strike in coming years, and their impact on humanity.</p> <p>The researchers, from universities including Peking University, Beijing and Oak Ridge National Laboratory in the US, hope their study can be used to show regional disparities in wildfire exposure to help prepare for fires in those areas.</p> <p>They used 13 Earth system models which simulate the atmosphere, the ocean, sea, ice, the land surface and the vegetation on land and the biogeochemistry of the ocean, and also show the movement of carbon through the Earth system.</p> <p>While the models showed a smaller increase of carbon released by wildfires, the socioeconomic factors had a greater increase.</p> <p>This, the researchers said, is because: "Such elevated socioeconomic risks are primarily caused by the compound regional enhancement of future wildfire activity and socioeconomic development in the western and central African countries, necessitating an emergent strategic preparedness to wildfires in these countries."</p> <p>As countries in western and central Africa develop, wildfires are more likely to hit residential and agricultural areas.</p> <p>During the 2019–2020 Australian bushfire season, a series of major wildfires burned large areas, costing more than US\$20bn, and killing at least 33 people. These types of impacts are likely to become more common.</p> <p>The researchers found many areas which are likely to face a "more flammable future", including the Congo, which under their modelling faces a higher leaf area index – meaning there will be more fuel to burn – and populated areas in the US which could face catastrophic impacts like those seen in Australia.</p> <p>"For the populated western and north-eastern coasts and the Appalachian Mountains of the US, as well as northern and eastern Australia, our observational constraint confirms the previously projected more flammable future from fuel drying under climate change, suggesting an increased likelihood of the 2019–2020 Australian bushfire and 2020 extreme western US wildfire seasons in the upcoming decades," the researchers said.</p> <p>The study was published in the journal Nature Communications.</p>
Return to Top	

Crime, Criminals

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	03/22 DOJ inadvertently lists NY 'sex cult' clients
SOURCE	https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10639767/Sarah-Lawrence-sex-cult-trial.html
GIST	<p>New York's business elite was left shaking in its boots Tuesday after a list of alleged clients of the student prostitute in the Sarah Lawrence 'sex cult' case was inadvertently published online.</p> <p>The list, which was entered into evidence under seal in the ongoing trial of accused cult leader Larry Ray, includes lawyers and businessmen and socialites throughout the Tri-state area.</p> <p>DailyMail.com acquired a copy of the list of 121 names which was taken down nearly as fast as it was put up.</p> <p>A top executive at The Gap clothing firm and her husband was one of two married couples included. A former New York State Supreme Court judge is also named.</p> <p>Another alleged client is a painter who has studios in Manhattan's East Village and in Italy. A third is an architect, famous for designing college and university buildings.</p> <p>An investment executive who was also in pedophile Jeffrey Epstein's infamous little black book of contacts is also listed.</p> <p>Other names include a hedge fund manager who has donated millions to charity and has his name on a museum building in New York, a Washington DC, lobbyist who has worked for a foreign resistance movement and an international diamond dealer.</p> <p>Also included is an executive at the Metropolitan Transit Authority, an account executive at Amazon and a veteran travel writer.</p> <p>The document is among the government exhibits admitted in the federal case against 62-year-old Ray, who is on trial in New York, charged with operating a sex cult out of his daughter's dorm room at Sarah Lawrence College.</p> <p>The list is said to have been compiled and included in an email by former Sarah Lawrence student Claudia Drury, 31, who has been on the stand giving evidence against Ray, whom she claims coerced her into becoming a prostitute.</p> <p>But somehow the government posted the 'sealed' document online and then immediately scrambled to stop the information getting out.</p> <p>'Per order of the Court, government exhibit #3217 (GX 3217) was admitted under seal,' a spokesman for the Department of Justice wrote in an email soon after the document was taken offline.</p> <p>'This file was inadvertently loaded to the U.S. v. Ray file share. Please do not reproduce, share, or use this exhibit in any way, if you have downloaded this file, please delete it.'</p> <p>But the department's plea is unlikely to be successful as the document has already been posted on Twitter.</p> <p>The list is included in an email said to be from Drury to the Department.</p> <p>'This is not an exhaustive list but it includes all my main clients/regulars and many others,' she wrote.</p> <p>Drury is one of at least five cult members who were students at the elite liberal arts college in Bronxville, just north of Manhattan, when they met Ray.</p>

Ray was introduced to the group in the fall of 2010 when he began living in his daughter Talia's on-campus dorm, where he persuaded her friends to stay the next summer at his city apartment.

Prosecutors say Ray coerced the students to join his 'family' as he accumulated power, sex and money, forcing one woman into a sex work enterprise so lucrative that she turned over more than \$1million to him in a single year.

Drury, 31, began her testimony Friday, telling jurors at Manhattan Federal Court how Ray's campaign of charisma resulted in her being hospitalized in a psychiatric facility and ultimately led her into a life of prostitution.

She described how she went from a naïve student to soliciting sex, ultimately handing over \$2.5million in earnings to Ray, his daughter Talia and his 'lieutenant' and co-accused Isabella Pollok.

Drury admitted that she had always been very uncomfortable and lacked confidence about her body and couldn't believe that anybody would find her attractive.

She credited this insecurity along with Ray's coercion with her decision to have sexual encounters with 'Sam', a married man from whom Ray bought power tools.

Earlier in the trial jurors were also shown texts between Drury and Pollok and Pollok and Talia apparently discussing Drury's prostitution, her clients, payment and transfers of cash into Pollok's bank account.

In the texts read aloud, Drury listed meetings and sums of money she expected in payment.

One read: 'I'm seeing Joe, the \$3,500 guy at 3:30pm. I believe that will be another \$8k though maybe less.'

Sums of money ranging from a few hundred to more than \$17,000 in cash and bank accounts were discussed.

In a follow up text exchange between Pollok and Talia allegedly regarding the transfer of money earned by Drury through prostitution, Talia reassures Pollok: 'We got the moollah.'

On Monday, the court was shown emails in which Drury praised Ray's selflessness and the supposed psychological 'help' he was providing to her and college friends including Santos Rosario, Dan Levin, Felicia Rosario and Ray's co-accused and alleged 'lieutenant' Isabella Pollok.

At the time, she referred to Ray as, 'the hero of the story.'

Taking the stand for a second day on Monday, she continued her account of the alleged gas-lighting, physical and sexual abuse that she claims she suffered at Ray's hands.

On one occasion, she recalled, Ray showed her a photograph of friend and fellow student Levin.

She explained: '[Ray] told me that he was having a confrontation or conversation with Dan about Dan's sexuality and that in the course of this Isabella was folding laundry and Dan kept eyeing a dress.'

'Larry asked Dan, "Do you want to wear the dress?" He told me Dan really did and so he made Dan put on the dress and go down to get mail wearing the dress.'

On his return to the Upper East Side apartment in which the students and Ray were, for the most part, living, Drury said the confrontation 'escalated.'

'From there it escalated to Larry telling Isabella to go get her bag of sex toys and dildos and to get the biggest one, and he [Ray] showed me a picture of Dan trying to fit it in his mouth,' she added.

'This was all framed as something Dan wanted – that was helpful and clarifying for Dan.'

But according to Drury, Levin's face was 'contorted' in the photograph in which he was looking directly at the camera.

She said: 'He looks panicked and questioning and scared. It's not a look I've actually ever seen on anyone's face again.'

During another incident recalled by Drury in court, Ray made a 'noose' out of tinfoil and had Levin place it round his testicles while he interrogated him – tightening the noose whenever he deemed the younger man to be 'playing with the truth.'

She went on to tell the court how the campaign of control escalated during the summer of 2013, when she and several others travelled to Pinehurst, North Carolina, to help with yardwork at Ray's stepfather's property.

At this point, she said, Ray was controlling what students ate – forbidding carbohydrates – and forcing them to work sometimes until three or four in the morning to re-do mistakes that he found in their work.

'Someone went out and got hamburgers and fries and milkshakes. [Ray] said, "This is your last meal, Felicia. You can have carbs; you can have whatever you want,"' she told the court.

Earlier in the trial, prosecutors began their opening statements alleging that Ray, an ex-convict, had used 'violence, fear, sex and manipulation' to get sex, power and money.

After learning the students' secrets and insecurities and gaining their trust, Ray exploited them, 'profiting off their labor, their money and even their bodies,' Assistant US Attorney Lindsey Keenan said.

'Once he gained control of their lives, ... he took over their lives.'

Ray's lawyer told the jury that Ray committed no federal crimes as he encircled himself with college-age 'storytellers' who claimed to have poisoned him and arranged to have him physically attacked.

'You'll see that Larry Ray is not guilty,' attorney Allegra Glashausser said.

Ray, who once served as the best man at a wedding of disgraced former New York City police Commissioner Bernard Kerik, has been incarcerated since his 2020 arrest.

He is a well-known New York scammer with a murky past. In addition to spending times behind bars for his role in a securities fraud scam, he has worked on Wall Street, owned nightclubs, been an FBI informant and inserted himself in into powerful networks by brokering meetings.

He had previously been sentenced to five years probation for his role in a securities fraud scam.

The allegations involving the latest case were laid out in a lengthy article by New York magazine's The Cut in 2019, that included accounts from some of the purported cult members.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/23 Belarus: Jan 6 rioter granted asylum
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/03/23/evan-neumann-belarus-capitol-riot-asylum-ukraine/
GIST	<p>A man on the FBI's wanted list for his alleged role in the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol riot has been granted asylum in Belarus, the country's state media reported Tuesday.</p> <p>Evan Neumann, a 49-year-old from California, fled to Europe after the attack on the U.S. Capitol. He lived in a rented apartment in Ukraine for four months before crossing into Belarus on foot through the Ukrainian swamps of Pripyat, near Chernobyl, late last year, Belarusian state television said at the time. He</p>

said he thought Ukrainian security service agents were pursuing him, and that he encountered snakes and wild boars on the journey.

In a video posted by state-owned television network BelTA on Tuesday, Neumann is pictured signing a migration document and shaking hands with a police official, who, according to English subtitles posted with the video, says: “Now you are completely under the protection of the Republic of Belarus.”

“Thanks a lot,” Neumann says, in accented Russian, waving the document and turning toward the camera and other officials in the room, his face clean-shaven and unsmiling.

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko and his close ally, Russian President Vladimir Putin, have frequently referenced the Capitol riot, calling the prosecution of those involved an example of “double standards” by the United States because it frequently criticizes crackdowns on anti-government protests abroad.

“Today I have mixed feelings,” Neumann told BelTA in the report aired Tuesday. “I am glad Belarus took care of me. I am upset to find myself in a situation where I have problems in my own country.”

He appeared to be thinner than in his last appearance on Belarusian state television in November, in a segment titled “Goodbye, America,” and was wearing the same blue plaid shirt.

Neumann fled the United States in February last year. He was [charged](#) in D.C. a month later with participating in numerous violent acts against law enforcement officers, based on footage from body cameras. An arrest warrant was issued [in December](#).

The FBI alleges that he not only used his hands and fists to strike the officers but also used a metal barricade as a battering ram. About 140 police officers were injured by the mob falsely claiming President Donald Trump had won the 2020 election, and more than 225 people have been charged with assaulting, resisting or impeding officers or employees in the riot, [Justice Department records](#) show.

Neumann was identified from the body-cam footage by an anonymous tipster identifying themselves as a family friend, according to the criminal complaint. Investigators also compared the footage to a 2018 TV news report in San Francisco on his arrest for violating orders not to enter a disaster area after a wildfire.

Neumann was interviewed during the report.

Neumann has previously said he does not think he committed any crime at the Capitol.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/22 Freedom after 25yrs wrongful conviction
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/mar/22/michigan-brothers-murder-wrongful-conviction-prison
GIST	<p>Two Michigan brothers who were wrongfully convicted in the murder of a family friend walked free Tuesday and were reunited with their family after 25 years behind bars.</p> <p>George and Melvin DeJesus were convicted in the 1995 killing of Margaret Midkiff. Oakland county circuit Judge Martha Anderson set aside their convictions early Tuesday.</p> <p>“I wish to apologize for the actions taken by your fellow citizens against you,” Anderson said. “Twenty-five years of your life has been taken from you that cannot be replaced.”</p> <p>The brothers later embraced family members – and met some for the first time – at a restaurant in Lansing.</p> <p>Asked what’s next for the brothers, Melvin DeJesus said it would be a collective decision.</p>

“I believe it’s going to be a family meeting, a get-together to see what’s next on our agenda as free men, because we was kids when we came in and now we’re men,” DeJesus said, gesturing to his daughter to join him and to his brother at the front of the room.

He credited his mother in particular for never letting them lose hope, saying he never doubted that one day they would be free.

Midkiff was sexually assaulted and killed in her home in Pontiac, Michigan, in July 1995. She was found bound with wire and with a pillow over her head.

A year later, DNA from the scene was matched to Brandon Gohagen. Assistant attorney general Robyn Frankel said Tuesday that no DNA was ever discovered that connected the DeJesus brothers to the crime.

Gohagen testified at trial in 1997 that the brothers forced him to sexually assault Midkiff, and that they killed her. George and Melvin DeJesus were convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison, while Gohagen was convicted of second-degree murder and first-degree criminal sexual conduct.

But Gohagen acted alone, Frankel said.

She said she believes Gohagen sexually assaulted at least 12 women in the 1990s, including Rosalia Brantley, a 22-year-old woman whose dead body was found rolled up in a curtain in a park in 1994. Gohagen was convicted of her murder and sentenced to life in prison in 2017.

The attorney general’s Conviction Integrity Unit, led by Frankel, found witnesses who corroborated the alibis that the brothers presented at trial and discovered that Gohagen had failed a pretrial polygraph test that was instrumental in the case.

In Oakland county court on Tuesday morning, the DeJesus brothers expressed their sympathy for Midkiff’s family and said they hope their families can meet on good terms.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/22 Pet experts warn: increase in canine thefts
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/mar/22/dog-gone-pet-experts-warn-increase-canine-thefts/
GIST	<p>The American Kennel Club recently released its annual ranking of the most popular breeds — and for would-be dognappers, it’s a hit list for purloined puppy profits.</p> <p>The French bulldog, the Pembroke Welsh corgi, the bichon frise and the Norwegian Lundehund epitomize the size, popularity and rarity that thieves prize most highly during a pandemic-influenced demand for canine affection, dog experts say.</p> <p>“Small-breed, purebred dogs are most prone to dognapping because they are easier and more lucrative to resell,” said Dr. Zac Pilossoph, a consulting veterinarian at the nonprofit Healthy Paws Foundation. “In addition to breed predilection, thieves may also target dogs that are friendly and tame because they’re easier to snatch and people are more likely to repurchase a friendly dog.”</p> <p>No law enforcement agency or advocacy group tracks U.S. dog thefts, but the American Kennel Club, Adopt-a-Pet.com and other pet advocates have noted a trend in thefts of rare but popular purebred dogs.</p> <p>PetKeen, an online pet guide run by veterinarians, reports that French bulldogs are the breed most likely to be stolen in the U.S. The dogs can fetch up to \$10,000 apiece.</p> <p>Five people in Los Angeles face charges in last year’s theft of Lady Gaga’s French bulldogs. Her dog walker was shot in the incident.</p> <p>The next most stolen breeds, in descending order: English bulldogs, Yorkshire terriers, Chihuahuas, German shepherds, Maltese, Shih Tzus, Labrador retrievers, poodles and Siberian huskies.</p>

Marking a dog with identifying information and details remains the best way to prevent theft and reunite stolen pooches with their owners, advocates say.

Professionals agree that microchipping a dog — a painless process of inserting a rice-sized smart chip under the skin to transmit the owner's name, telephone number and address — has become the best way to catch snatch-and-grab thieves.

According to the American Veterinary Medical Association, more than half of microchipped dogs make it home. Just 22% of dogs without microchips are reunited with owners.

Dr. Pilossoph, who has worked at emergency animal hospitals in different parts of the country, said he routinely checks lost and unidentified pets for microchips.

"Sadly, I have noticed most do not have microchips at all, or a microchip is present but the information is not registered and kept up to date," the veterinarian said.

The American Kennel Club cites statistics that put the number of stolen dogs at around 2 million a year.

When demand for dogs skyrocketed at the start of coronavirus lockdowns two years ago, fake pet websites multiplied, the Better Business Bureau reported. The agency said almost 4,000 Americans and Canadians paid online scammers in 2020 for dogs that never arrived. That was nearly five times the number in 2017.

In an emergency alert this month, the nonprofit Adopt-a-Pet warned owners to take added precautions, including keeping photos of their pets off social media, not allowing cellphones to distract them while walking dogs and not leaving dogs tied up outside.

"As reports of violent pet theft rise around the nation, it's important for pet owners to be vigilant," Abbie Moore, the web service's chief operating officer, said in a statement.

The alert also advises owners to pair up with other dog walkers in their neighborhoods for safety, consider taking an online self-defense class and keep microchips registered and up to date.

"Americans are desperate for animal companionship during COVID lockdowns, and at the same time, supply has fallen in many parts of the country," the Adopt-a-Pet alert states. "Thieves are taking brazen action to steal dogs, not just from backyards but also from people who are out walking their dogs. And those dogs are then being sold, sometimes on street corners, but sometimes on classified sites."

Meanwhile, the American Kennel Club, which registers purebred pedigrees in the U.S., reported on Feb. 26 that many thieves engage in "dog flipping" by claiming to be the owners of lost pets and then selling the animals as rescues.

Only a handful of states — including California, Virginia, New York and Oklahoma — have stiffened penalties for dog theft to include prison time and thousands of dollars in fines.

That makes dog theft a low-risk gamble for criminals who notice a friendly, small dog unattended in a window or yard.

"These types of dogs are easy to grab and run with," said Tom Sharp, president and CEO of AKC Reunite.

Karin TarQwyn, a private investigator in Nebraska who specializes in missing pets, told Time magazine in a March 12 article that telephone calls to her small agency about missing French bulldogs have increased 60% to 70% over the past 18 months, to about three to five each week.

Such reports make it essential for pet boarders and groomers to check for documentation and paperwork on purebreds, some advocates say.

“I believe these dogs are being targeted for financial gain through dog trafficking,” said Katie Hanke, owner of Grateful Grooming in Athens, Georgia. “Purebreds of any breed generally have a pretty large price tag placed on them.”

According to the American Pet Products Association’s 2021-2022 national survey, 69 million American households own at least one dog. There were 89.7 million dogs in the US in 2017, according to the association.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/23 Surge in shootings show no sign of easing
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/23/us/shooting-gun-violence.html
GIST	<p>On Friday night in Louisiana, a seven-month-old baby was shot in the head, caught in the crossfire during a drive-by shooting. In Norfolk, Va., an argument early Saturday over a spilled drink escalated into gunfire outside a pizzeria, killing two people, including a young reporter for the local newspaper.</p> <p>Later that same day in the Arkansas farming town of Dumas, an annual car show and community event to promote nonviolence became a bloody crime scene after a gunfight broke out, killing one and injuring more than two dozen people, including several children.</p> <p>And in Miami Beach, where spring break revelers have descended, officials this week declared a state of emergency and imposed a curfew after a pair of weekend shootings.</p> <p>All told, in a single weekend when the calendar turned to spring, there were at least nine mass shooting events — defined by at least four people shot — across the country, as well as many more with fewer victims. It was an ominous harbinger for the warmer summer months ahead, which is typically America’s most violent time.</p> <p>“We can’t endure this anymore, we just simply can’t,” said Dan Gelber, the mayor of Miami Beach, in announcing the curfew. “This isn’t your father’s, your mother’s spring break. This is something totally different.”</p> <p>The surge in gun violence in the United States that began in 2020 as the pandemic set in and continued through a summer of unrest following the murder of George Floyd, shows no sign of easing. Homicides were up 30 percent that year, the largest annual recorded increase.</p> <p>While in most places gun violence has not reached the record levels of the 1990s, and other types of crime have remained low during the pandemic, the continued drumbeat of shootings has forced officials like those in Miami Beach to take extraordinary measures at a time when gun ownership has soared, and as some states have moved to pass laws to allow easier access to firearms.</p> <p>“When picnics and outside events like this car show, when all that happens that’s a kickoff” to a period of violence, said Mark Bryant, the founder of the Gun Violence Archive, a nonprofit organization that collects data on shootings. “And I’m just afraid the kickoff was this weekend.”</p> <p>James Densley, a professor of criminal justice at Metro State University in Minnesota and co-founder of the Violence Project, which researches mass shootings, said the types of shootings that occurred over the weekend in public spaces, like the one at the car show in Arkansas, grab people’s attention because they took the lives of innocent bystanders. But, he said, they obscure the fact that the majority of the gun violence that plagues America doesn’t affect strangers. It’s more likely to be the settling of personal grudges or tit-for-tat gang shootings that have surged in cities like Los Angeles.</p> <p>In New York City, many neighborhoods where shootings have long been part of the fabric of daily life — largely lower-income with predominantly Black and Latino residents — bear the brunt of the pandemic’s sustained spike in gun violence. Last weekend, 29 people were shot, including two patrons at a bar in</p>

Queens; a man on a subway platform in Brooklyn; and a Jamaican immigrant, who was killed after an argument in the Bronx.

Mayor Eric Adams, who took office at the start of the year after campaigning on a message of public safety, has focused on the prevalence of firearms on city streets, attempting to curtail their spread through legislative and policing changes. He has repeatedly asked the courts and state lawmakers to treat weapon offenses with harsher penalties, calling for decreasing the minimum age that someone can be charged as an adult in certain situations and for revising the state's 2020 bail reform laws.

"I say this over and over again," Mr. Adams said at a news conference on Monday, "we need help from Washington, we need help on the state level. We need help. But with or without that help, we're going to make our city a safe city."

Mr. Adams, a former police captain, also played a crucial role in the reinstatement of a specialized N.Y.P.D. unit that focuses on gun arrests, which was disbanded in 2020, amid citywide protests following the murder of Mr. Floyd. Officers in the unit last week began to patrol about 25 areas of the city to recover weapons where shootings are particularly high.

Around the country, gun purchases, which surged in 2020, have begun to level off, at least when measured by the number of federal background checks, a proximate measure of Americans' gun-buying habits. After setting records during the pandemic — in a single week in March of 2021 the F.B.I. reported more than 1.2 million background checks, the highest ever — figures have largely returned to prepandemic levels.

Still, researchers estimate that there are at least 15 million more guns in circulation in the country than there would have been had there not been such a large increase in purchasing during the pandemic.

Garen J. Wintemute, who researches gun violence at the University of California, Davis, said that while he was pleased to see the apparent reversal in the surge of gun purchases, "we have no choice but to live through the aftermath, whatever it is going to be. We're doing that now."

Criminologists and researchers say no single cause explains the rise in gun violence, but they point to a confluence of traumatic events, from the economic and social disruptions of the pandemic to the unrest of 2020, as well as the accompanying surge in gun ownership.

Dr. Wintemute said he worries that Americans increasingly see those they disagree with as the enemy.

"We have lowered the bar, the threshold of insult or affront or whatever, that's necessary for violence to seem legitimate," he said.

The rise in shootings comes as some Republican lawmakers in red states move to pass more permissive gun laws.

On Monday, Eric Holcomb, the Republican governor of Indiana, signed a bill that will allow people to carry handguns without first securing a permit. Earlier this year, Ohio and Alabama also passed so-called "constitutional carry" laws. Last year, five other states — Iowa, Texas, Utah, Tennessee and Montana — approved similar laws.

Supporters of the new laws have framed them as necessary to allow citizens to defend themselves at a time of rising gun violence, and when there is at least the perception that police in some communities have been less visible following the protests of 2020.

"We are at a time right now when police feel handcuffed, citizens don't know where they can turn for help and this just gives us a fighting chance," Rob Sexton, the legislative affairs director for the Buckeye Firearms Association, which lobbied for the new law in Ohio, recently told the Statehouse News Bureau.

Still, some in law enforcement object to the new laws, arguing that they will put officers at risk.

	<p>At the federal level, promises to spend billions on community violence prevention programs — like groups led by former gang members working in hospitals and in the streets to reduce gun crime — have so far gone unfulfilled, as the centerpiece of President Biden’s domestic agenda, the Build Back Better bill, has stalled.</p> <p>“It’s going to be a real shame if that funding doesn’t come through,” Dr. Wintemute said. “We’re going to be heading into a summer where we still have the pandemic — sorry, we still will — there will be war in the background, in Ukraine and maybe other places too by then. It’s a federal election year, and it’s going to be very hot.”</p> <p>On Sunday morning in Dumas, Ark., the parking lot of Fred’s Store, wedged between a McDonald’s and a butcher shop, was stained with blood, while police were still searching for suspects in Saturday night’s shooting.</p> <p>“Kids were enjoying themselves, people were enjoying themselves,” said Amber Brown-Madison, a local politician who attended the annual event, which had been canceled for two years because of the pandemic, with her children and her sister. “After we heard about two or three shots, I immediately grabbed my sister and my children. We just hit the ground. That’s all we could do. I couldn’t say anything but, ‘Jesus.’”</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/22 Fired employee opens fire on boss' home
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/former-employer-opens-fire-on-bosses-home-after-recent-firing
GIST	<p>SEATTLE – A man has been arrested for allegedly shooting at his former employer’s home after he was fired.</p> <p>Seattle police say the shots were fired around 12:15 a.m. in the 3000 block of Harris Place South.</p> <p>The victims told officers they were at home when someone drove by and opened fire, hitting the home and one vehicle.</p> <p>Police say the suspect, who the victims had recently fired from their business, had also been sending threatening text messages.</p> <p>The former employee is a Mason County resident, deputies there found and detained him while SPD came to pick him up.</p> <p>Officials say the unidentified suspect is facing an assault and unlawful possession of a firearm charge.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/22 Escape: teens house arrest cut off monitors
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/operation-crime-justice/teen-robbery-suspects-on-house-arrest-on-the-run-after-cutting-off-electronic-monitors
GIST	<p>FEDERAL WAY, Wash. — KOMO News first reported about two teenagers who were charged following a violent and brazen pawn shop robbery before a judge sent them home on house arrest.</p> <p>Now, investigators say the two armed robbery suspects who are 15 and 16 are on the run as detectives investigate if the pair are involved in more crimes.</p> <p>They might be young, but investigators say the two teens are dangerous.</p> <p>Detectives say in February the teen suspects were part of a group seen on surveillance video and holding up a Federal Way pawn shop that was full of people,. The suspects were caught on camera pistol whipping customers and even firing a shot to gain compliance.</p>

“Not in a million years would I have thought this happened the way it did,” one of the robbery victims said on condition of anonymity.

The teens were arrested, but King County Superior Court Judge Nelson Lee released them with electronic home monitoring as the case proceeds.

Detectives say the teen suspects cut off their ankle monitors before juvenile arrest warrants were issued last Thursday.

“What’s the justice for the people that experienced the trauma that they did that day?” asked the victim. “I don’t know anyone in this world that thinks that’s the correct way of going about it.”

Prosecutors had pushed for the teenagers to stay in juvenile detention.

“We understand the victim’s concerns, this is very concerning to us too,” said Casey McNerthney, spokesman for the King County Prosecutors' Office. “Those are cases consistently where we go before a judge and say, this is why we’re concerned for the public and this is why people should reasonably be held.”

Now detectives are investigating if the teens are involved in other recent robberies across the area.

According to court documents, the 16-year-old suspect has a distinctive limp because he has a right prosthetic leg.

Police say that suspect description has come up before.

“When there’s evidence that you committed an armed robbery, regardless of your age, that’s a very serious crime,” McNerthney said.

While the suspects are on the run, the victims they're accused of terrorizing have their guards up.

“I’m going to have a gun on me at all times,” the victim said. A “concealed weapon, open carry, anywhere I go.”

When the teenagers were initially put on electronic home monitoring, KOMO News reached out to Judge Lee’s office for a statement and his office sent a statement saying, “Judges and the court are prohibited by the code of judicial conduct from commenting on pending cases. Furthermore, doing so would lead to an appearance of unfairness.”

KOMO News has not received an updated comment from the judge.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/22 WSP: ‘dangerous trend’ drive-by shootings
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/troopers-report-dangerous-trend-rising-drive-by-shootings-highways/FPWEVWNJ7FFAVEZRC4FKUEI4O4/
GIST	<p>KING COUNTY, Wash. — With 23 drive-by shootings on state highways and roadways this year, Pierce County is on pace to see more than 100 by the end of 2022.</p> <p>Last year, Washington State Patrol investigated a total of 31 drive-by shootings.</p> <p>“It is a very, very dangerous trend that we’re observing here,” WSP Trooper Robert Reyer said. “It’s very concerning to see this trend at this point, that people feel it is OK to discharge their firearms while they are driving, or even point them at other cars that drive near them.”</p>

	<p>Troopers in King County are also reporting a higher-than-average number of drive-by shootings. So far this year, there have been 17 drive-by shootings investigated by WSP in King County. That's five more than the same time last year.</p> <p>Reyer said almost all of the incidents in Pierce County are related to road rage.</p> <p>"I don't know if being isolated for quite some time, or not being around other people very much for the last couple of years changed people's behaviors... (Two years ago) we still saw aggressive drivers. We still saw people speeding. We still saw people cutting others off. But I think that mostly people were more courteous to each other."</p> <p>Reyer's suggestion for concerned drivers is to call 911.</p> <p>"If there is a vehicle that you observe that is driving in an aggressive manner, you can call 911. There's a very good chance that our troopers are somewhere along I-5 near that location," Reyner said.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/22 Franklin County jail: second death in month
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/womans-death-second-in-a-month-in-franklin-county-jail/
GIST	<p>PASCO — A second person in a month has died at the Franklin County jail.</p> <p>An autopsy was being conducted Tuesday after a 42-year-old Othello woman was found dead in her cell in the Pasco jail last week.</p> <p>The Snohomish County Medical Examiner is trying to determine why Faviola Valenzuela died on March 15, Franklin County Coroner Curtis McGary said.</p> <p>Valenzuela was brought to the jail the previous weekend, Sheriff Jim Raymond told the Herald.</p> <p>A couple days later on Tuesday, another inmate alerted jail officials that Valenzuela was having a medical problem at 11:30 a.m., Raymond said. A corrections officer found she had died.</p> <p>Raymond did not have information available on why she was taken into custody, but he said there were some mental health concerns.</p> <p>Family members are still struggling to find out what happened to Valenzuela, according to a GoFundMe campaign set up by Juli De Dios. The site describes her as a good sister, aunt and daughter, who took good care of those she loved.</p> <p>She struggled with a mental disability, the GoFundMe campaign said. People who want to donate can go to bit.ly/ValenzuelaFundraiser.</p> <p>The Franklin County Sheriff's Office is investigating her death, and the information will be provided to the prosecutor's office and the county's insurance company.</p> <p>Last month, Thomas D. Franklin, 57, collapsed in the booking area of the jail on Feb. 22.</p> <p>He was taken to Kadlec Regional Medical Center in Richland where he died the next day.</p> <p>Blood test results have not returned to determine what Franklin died from. The sheriff's office is also investigating that death.</p> <p>Franklin was being booked in on out-of-state warrants at the time.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/22 Elected official guilty Jan 6 Capitol entry
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation-politics/capitol-riot-trial-opens-for-cowboys-for-trump-founder/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal judge on Tuesday convicted an elected official from New Mexico of illegally entering restricted U.S. Capitol grounds but acquitted him of engaging in disorderly conduct during the riot that disrupted Congress from certifying Joe Biden’s presidential election victory.</p> <p>U.S. District Court Judge Trevor McFadden heard one day of testimony without a jury on Monday before handing down a verdict in the misdemeanor case against Otero County Commissioner Couy Griffin, a 48-year-old former rodeo rider who helped found a group called Cowboys for Trump.</p> <p>McFadden, a nominee of then-President Donald Trump, said there was ample evidence that Griffin knew he was in a restricted area and didn’t leave. Griffin crossed over three walls, needing help from others or a ladder to get over them, the judge noted.</p> <p>“All of this would suggest to a normal person that perhaps you should not be entering the area,” McFadden said from the bench.</p> <p>But the judge said prosecutors didn’t meet their burden to prove that Griffin engaged in disorderly conduct.</p> <p>“Arguably, he was trying to calm people down, not rile them up,” he said.</p> <p>Griffin’s trial in Washington, D.C., was the second among the hundreds of federal cases arising from the Jan. 6, 2021, siege. Earlier this month, in the first trial, a jury convicted a Texas man, Guy Wesley Reffitt, of storming the Capitol with a holstered handgun, interfering with police and obstructing Congress’ joint session to certify the Electoral College vote.</p> <p>The outcome of Griffin’s trial could have a ripple effect, helping other Capitol riot defendants decide whether to let a judge or a jury decide their case.</p> <p>But the case against Griffin is unlike most Jan. 6 cases and may not be a bellwether for defendants who are charged with storming the Capitol.</p> <p>Griffin is one of the few riot defendants who wasn’t accused of entering the Capitol building or engaging in any violent or destructive behavior. His lawyers argued that he was selectively prosecuted for his political views.</p> <p>Griffin was charged with two misdemeanors: entering and remaining in a restricted building or grounds and disorderly and disruptive conduct in a restricted building or grounds. Both carry maximum sentences of one year imprisonment.</p> <p>Griffin is scheduled to be sentenced on June 17. He was jailed for more than two weeks after his arrest on Jan. 19, 2021.</p> <p>Griffin described himself as “halfway pleased” with the split verdict and said he will continue to view his involvement in Jan. 6 as “a badge of honor.”</p> <p>“I stand proud of where I’m at today and the fight that I’ve been in over the course of the last year-and-a-half,” he told reporters outside the courthouse.</p> <p>Griffin, one of three members of the Otero County Commission in southern New Mexico, is among a handful of riot defendants who either held public office or ran for a government leadership post in the 2 1/2 years before the attack.</p>

He is among only three riot defendants who have asked for a bench trial, in which judges decide a case without a jury. Griffin said he doesn't regret waiving his right to a jury trial.

"If I was anywhere but Washington, D.C., I would say, 'Go with a jury trial,'" Griffin said. "You can't get a fair jury trial in Washington, D.C., if you're someone like me, a strong conservative."

Loyola Law School professor Laurie Levenson said the conviction for entering restricted grounds helps establish for the government that the area was off limits to the public and will discourage other defendants from using similar arguments.

"This will send a message to other defendants that they are unlikely to win on a technical argument that the areas outside the Capitol were not off limits," Levenson said.

The verdicts also may lead some defendants facing the same charges as Griffin to go to trial if they believe the judge deciding their fate has a high standard of what constitutes disorderly conduct, Levenson said. Still, Levenson said the argument wouldn't be helpful to defendants who entered the Capitol building or committed violence on Capitol grounds.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Janani Iyengar said Griffin climbed over metal bike racks, up a plywood ramp and shouted over the crowd about his belief that the election was stolen from then-President Donald Trump.

"He was being extremely loud, climbing over barriers, engaging with the crowd," she said in her closing arguments.

Defense attorney Nicholas Smith said the case against Griffin was "built on a series of false assumptions and premises." Trial testimony showed Griffin went to the Capitol to support "free and fair elections," Smith told the judge.

A key question in Griffin's case was whether he entered a restricted area while Vice President Pence was still present on Capitol grounds, a prerequisite for the U.S. Secret Service to invoke access restrictions.

Griffin's attorneys said in a court filing that Pence had already departed the restricted area before the earliest that Griffin could have entered it, but Secret Service inspector Lanelle Hawa testified that Pence never left the restricted area during the riot.

Hawa said agents took Pence from his office at the Capitol to a secure location at an underground loading dock on the Capitol complex. Pence remained in the loading dock location for four to five hours, until the joint session of Congress resumed on the night of Jan. 6, Hawa testified.

Smith said prosecutors apparently believe Griffin engaged in disorderly conduct by peacefully leading a prayer on the Capitol steps.

"That is offensive and wrong," Smith told the judge during his brief opening statements.

Prosecutors didn't give any opening statements. Their first witness was Matthew Struck, who joined Griffin at the Capitol and served as his videographer. Struck has an immunity deal with prosecutors for his testimony.

After attending Trump's "Stop the Steal" rally on Jan. 6, Griffin and Struck walked over barriers and up a staircase to enter a stage that was under construction on the Capitol's Lower West Terrace for Biden's inauguration, according to prosecutors.

Prosecutors played video clips that showed Griffin moving through the mob that formed outside the Capitol, where police used pepper spray to quell rioters.

	<p>“I love the smell of napalm in the air,” Griffin said in an apparent reference to a quote from the war movie “Apocalypse Now.”</p> <p>After climbing over a stone wall and entering a restricted area outside the Capitol, Griffin said, “This is our house ... we should all be armed,” according to prosecutors. He called it “a great day for America” and added, “The people are showing that they have had enough,” prosecutors said.</p> <p>In a court filing, prosecutors called Griffin “an inflammatory provocateur and fabulist who engages in racist invective and propounds baseless conspiracy theories, including that Communist China stole the 2020 Presidential Election.”</p> <p>Griffin’s attorneys say hundreds if not thousands of other people did exactly what Griffin did on Jan. 6 and haven’t been charged with any crimes.</p> <p>More than 770 people have been charged with federal crimes related to the Capitol riot. More than 230 riot defendants have pleaded guilty, mostly to misdemeanors, and at least 127 of them have been sentenced. Approximately 100 others have trial dates.</p> <p>Griffin had vowed to arrive at the courthouse on horseback on Monday. Instead, he showed up as a passenger in a pickup truck that had a horse trailer on the back.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/22 Funding for sexual assault kits storage
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/local/seattlenews/article/Washington-sexual-assault-kit-storage-17021428.php
GIST	<p>More than a dozen Seattle-area law enforcement agencies — including police departments in Bothell and Redmond — will receive funding for refrigeration units meant for storing evidence from sexual assault investigations, according to state Attorney General Bob Ferguson.</p> <p>“More storage means more evidence can be tested, and more crimes can be solved,” Ferguson said in a news release. “These resources will bring justice to survivors.”</p> <p>The money is being allocated under Ferguson’s Sexual Assault Kit Initiative, a federally funded program his office started in 2017 to address the state’s huge backlog of sexual assault kits. An estimated \$177,000 in federal dollars will be distributed to 53 city police departments and county sheriff’s offices across Washington, the news release said.</p> <p>The money is meant to help local law enforcement agencies comply with a 2020 state law that requires evidence from unreported sexual assaults be stored for at least 20 years. Kits from unreported assaults are taken at hospitals and then turned over to law enforcement agencies for storage. They can be used as evidence later should a victim choose to file a report.</p> <p>The 2020 law requires evidence from reported assaults be stored for 100 years.</p> <p>In partnership with the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs, Ferguson’s office asked local law enforcement agencies to determine how much new cold storage equipment they would need to comply with the law. Of the state’s 260 local agencies, 53 said they would need more than they had.</p> <p>Those agencies will purchase the storage units themselves, but will be reimbursed by the state. Price estimates submitted to the state by those agencies range from \$300 to \$10,000.</p> <p>King County agencies that will be reimbursed for their purchases include the Black Diamond, Kent, Kirkland and Redmond police departments. The Brier, Lynnwood, Mill Creek, Monroe and Edmonds police departments in Snohomish County — along with the Bothell Police Department, whose jurisdiction includes parts of King and Snohomish counties — will also be reimbursed. The same is true for several Pierce County agencies. Those include the Bonney Lake, Fife, Lakewood, Orting, Puyallup and Gig</p>

	<p>Harbor police departments.</p> <p>State leaders have taken several steps in recent years to reduce the backlog of untested sexual assault kits in Washington, which reached roughly 10,000 in 2015. That year, the state Legislature directed millions of dollars to the State Patrol's crime lab, which oversees all DNA evidence testing in Washington, to help with processing.</p> <p>In 2017, Ferguson's office formed the state's Sexual Assault Kit Initiative after receiving a \$3 million federal grant for such efforts. His office dedicated half of that grant, the maximum amount allowed, to pay for more testing.</p> <p>In 2019, Ferguson's office received another \$2.5 million in federal funding for use in addressing the backlog. That same year, the state Legislature authorized funding for the construction of a DNA lab in Vancouver that, when complete, will help the state's crime lab process a higher volume of DNA cases at a faster rate.</p> <p>Thanks to these efforts, the state's crime lab has tested 5,278 backlogged kits since 2015, the news release said. That has led to 1,315 positive DNA matches, it said.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/22 Lacey high school evacuated: bomb threat
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article259663690.html
GIST	<p>River Ridge High School was evacuated Tuesday morning after a bomb threat, according to Lacey police and a district official.</p> <p>About 9:25 a.m., the school received a call from someone who said there was a bomb at the school and provided a series of room numbers, according to police. Students were evacuated, North Thurston Public Schools spokesman Aaron Wyatt said.</p> <p>Police searched the school but nothing was found.</p> <p>The evacuation order was lifted about 12:30 p.m, Wyatt said.</p> <p>This is the second such threat at the school since last month. In early February, an active shooter threat resulted in students being sent home for the day.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/22 Lawsuit: NYPD illegally obtains, stores DNA
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/nypd-accused-illegally-obtaining-storing-dna-samples-32000/story?id=83598107
GIST	<p>A federal lawsuit accuses the New York Police Department of surreptitiously taking DNA samples without obtaining warrants and storing the genetic material in perpetuity in an illegal and unregulated database.</p> <p>The database turns thousands of people, primarily Black and Latino people, into "permanent criminal suspects," according to the lawsuit filed Monday in federal court in Manhattan.</p> <p>Plaintiff Shakira Leslie was one of the nearly 32,000 individuals who had DNA taken without her knowledge, the lawsuit says.</p> <p>In 2019, Leslie was 23 and had left a cousin's birthday party when police pulled over the car she was riding in for a traffic violation, the lawsuit says. There was a gun in the car and everyone was arrested, it says.</p> <p>At the precinct, the lawsuit says, officers deprived Leslie of food and water for more than 12 hours so when she was finally offered a cup of water, she immediately drank it.</p>

Leslie was released and the charges against dropped, but not before the NYPD collected her drinking cup and took her DNA, according to the lawsuit, which was filed by the Legal Aid Society on behalf of Leslie and a second plaintiff. It names as defendants several top officials at the NYPD and the city's Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, which maintains the DNA database.

"Ms. Leslie never offered, and was never asked for, her consent to have her DNA taken. And the NYPD did not obtain a warrant or court order before secretly taking her DNA and sending the sample to OCME to perform DNA testing," the lawsuit says, arguing the DNA collection and analysis violates the plaintiffs' rights against unreasonable searches and seizures.

The police routinely offer people who are being questioned about a crime a beverage, a cigarette or chewing gum and then collect DNA from the items, the lawsuit says. The suit claims the genetic material is stored and cataloged in a "suspect index" that puts people's DNA profiles through "a genetic lineup that compares the profiles against all past and future crime scene DNA evidence — all without obtaining a warrant or court order to conduct these DNA searches."

"Thousands of New Yorkers, most of whom are Black and brown, and many of whom have never been convicted of any crime, are illegally in the City's rogue DNA database, which treats people as suspects in every crime involving DNA," said Phil Desgranges, an attorney at the Legal Aid Society. "We simply cannot trust the NYPD to police itself, and we look forward to judicial review of these destructive practices to bring our clients the justice they deserve."

The New York City Law Department told ABC News it would review the lawsuit.

A spokesman for the NYPD, Sgt. Edward Riley, said the department would also review the lawsuit but said that DNA collection is among the best practices of law enforcement.

"Behind every time the NYPD collects DNA from a suspect in a criminal investigation, there is a crime victim who is suffering and seeking justice. The driving motivation for the NYPD to collect DNA is to legally identify the correct perpetrator, build the strongest case possible for investigators and our partners in the various prosecutor's offices, and bring closure to victims and their families," Riley said in a statement provided to ABC News.

"The local DNA database complies with all applicable laws and is managed and used in accordance with the highest scientific standards set by independent accrediting bodies that have regularly reappraised the existence of the database," the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner said in a statement.

The Legal Aid Society says in the lawsuit that the database violates state laws that limit DNA indexing and "hoards the DNA of arrestees and suspects" without oversight and often at the expense of people of color.

"Black and Latinx people make up the vast majority of arrestees who are subject to the City's DNA taking and indexing practice," the lawsuit said. "Plaintiffs seek injunctive and declaratory relief to end the City's practice of targeting thousands of individuals, many of whom have never been convicted of a crime, to take their DNA and turn them into permanent suspects."

[Return to Top](#)

If you no longer wish to receive this report, please submit an email to intake@wsfc.wa.gov and enter UNSUBSCRIBE InFOCUS in the Subject line.

DISCLAIMER - the articles highlighted within InFOCUS is for informational purposes only and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Washington State Fusion Center, the City of Seattle, the Seattle Police Department or the Washington State Patrol and have been included only for ease of reference and academic purposes.

FAIR USE Notice All rights to these copyrighted items are reserved. Articles and graphics have been placed within for educational and discussion purposes only, in compliance with 'Fair Use' criteria established in Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976. The principle of 'Fair Use' was established as law by Section 107 of The Copyright Act of 1976. 'Fair Use' legally eliminates the need to obtain permission or pay royalties for the use of previously copyrighted materials if the purposes of display include 'criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching, scholarship, and research.' Section 107 establishes four criteria for determining whether the use of a work in any particular case qualifies as a 'fair use'. A work used does not necessarily have to satisfy all four criteria to qualify as an instance of 'fair use'. Rather, 'fair use' is determined by the overall extent to which the cited work does or does not substantially satisfy the criteria in their totality. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes of your own that go beyond 'fair use,' you must obtain permission from the copyright owner. For more information go to: [<http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml>](http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml)

THIS DOCUMENT MAY CONTAIN COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL. COPYING AND DISSEMINATION IS PROHIBITED WITHOUT PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNERS.

Source: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml>

[Return to Top](#)